

the most dangerous video game & comic 'zine

FLUX

SIMPSONS INVASION

AN INSIDE LOOK AT BART'S SICK & TWISTED NEW COMIC!

ISSUE #6



VIDEO GAME STRATEGY GUIDES!

TOSHINDEN • PANZER DRAGON • FX FIGHTER • LUNAR: ETERNAL BLUE

PRIMAL RAGE

STOMPS THE COMPETITION!

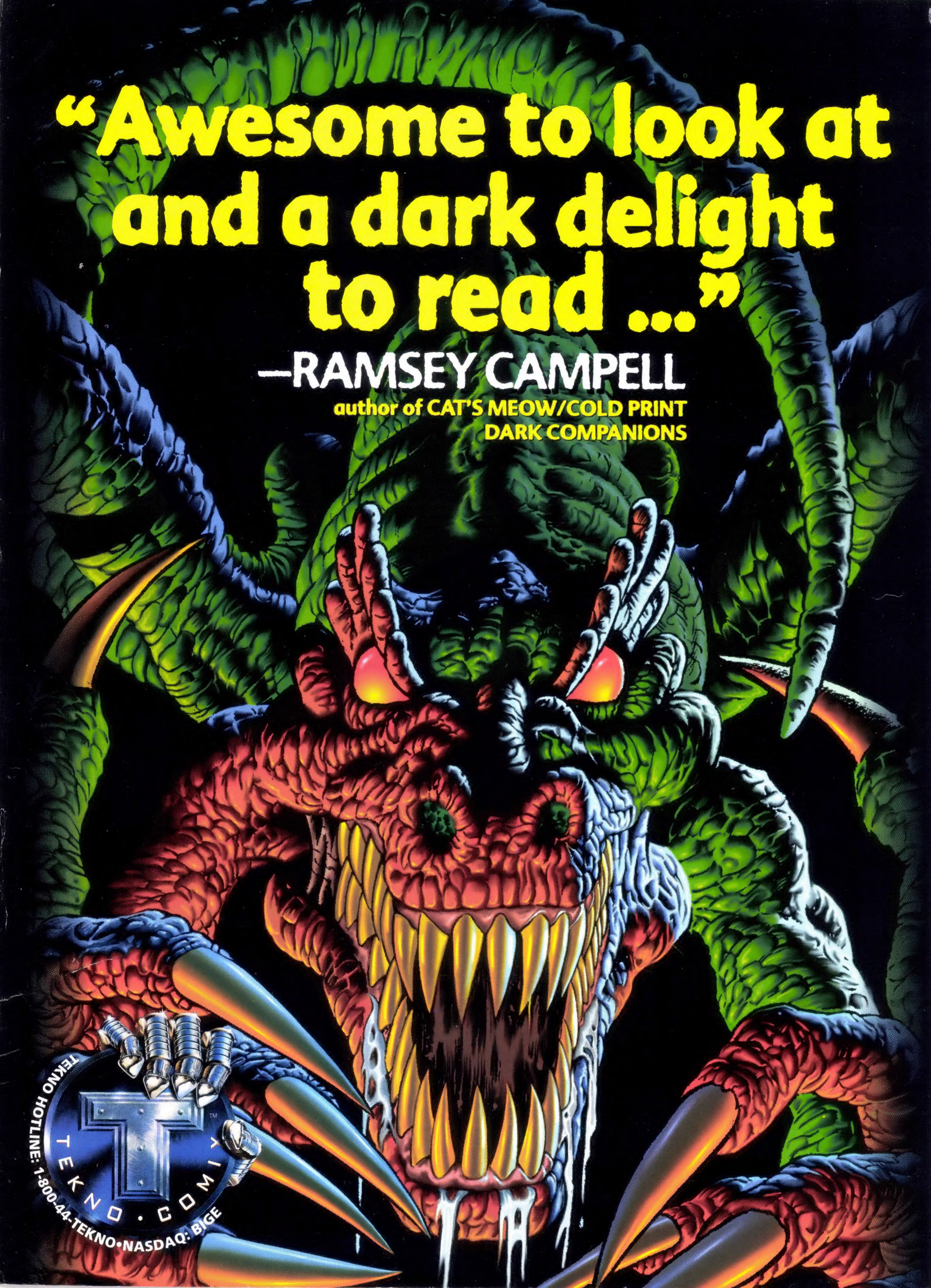


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**“Awesome to look at
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to read ...”**

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**author of CAT'S MEOW/COLD PRINT
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—Stephen Gallagher

author of CHIMERA//VALLEY OF LIGHTS/NIGHTMARE, WITH ANGEL/RED, RED ROBIN



TEKNO•COMIX™ more than just exploding heads.

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BATMAN & ROBIN

ADVENTURES



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...and a LITTLE PLUMBER shall lead them

HERE'S A FUN EXPERIMENT: GO TO A FRIEND WHO'S TOTALLY PSYCHED ABOUT NINTENDO'S FORTH-coming Ultra 64 super-system. It should be easy to find one; there's a growing number of gamers who completely and utterly believe that the Ultra will be the be-all, end-all of video games when it's released, uh, no sooner than April of next year. Now ask that Ultra fan one simple question: "Why?"

"Because it will be. Because it's Nintendo," will probably be the response.

Now, we'd be happy to run an Ultra 64 game screen shot on this page if we could...but you see, we don't have any. We have no picture of a controller, either, but from the rumors, it sounds like you need more than two hands to use the thing. All we really have is a logo, a list of fancy numbers and a photo of a black box that looks like a 3DO and a new-style Genesis did the nasty. We've never touched it. We've never played it. At this point, Ultra 64 is more rumor than reality. So why are so many people so sure that the Ultra is the Video Messiah? Why is everyone praying to St. Mario?

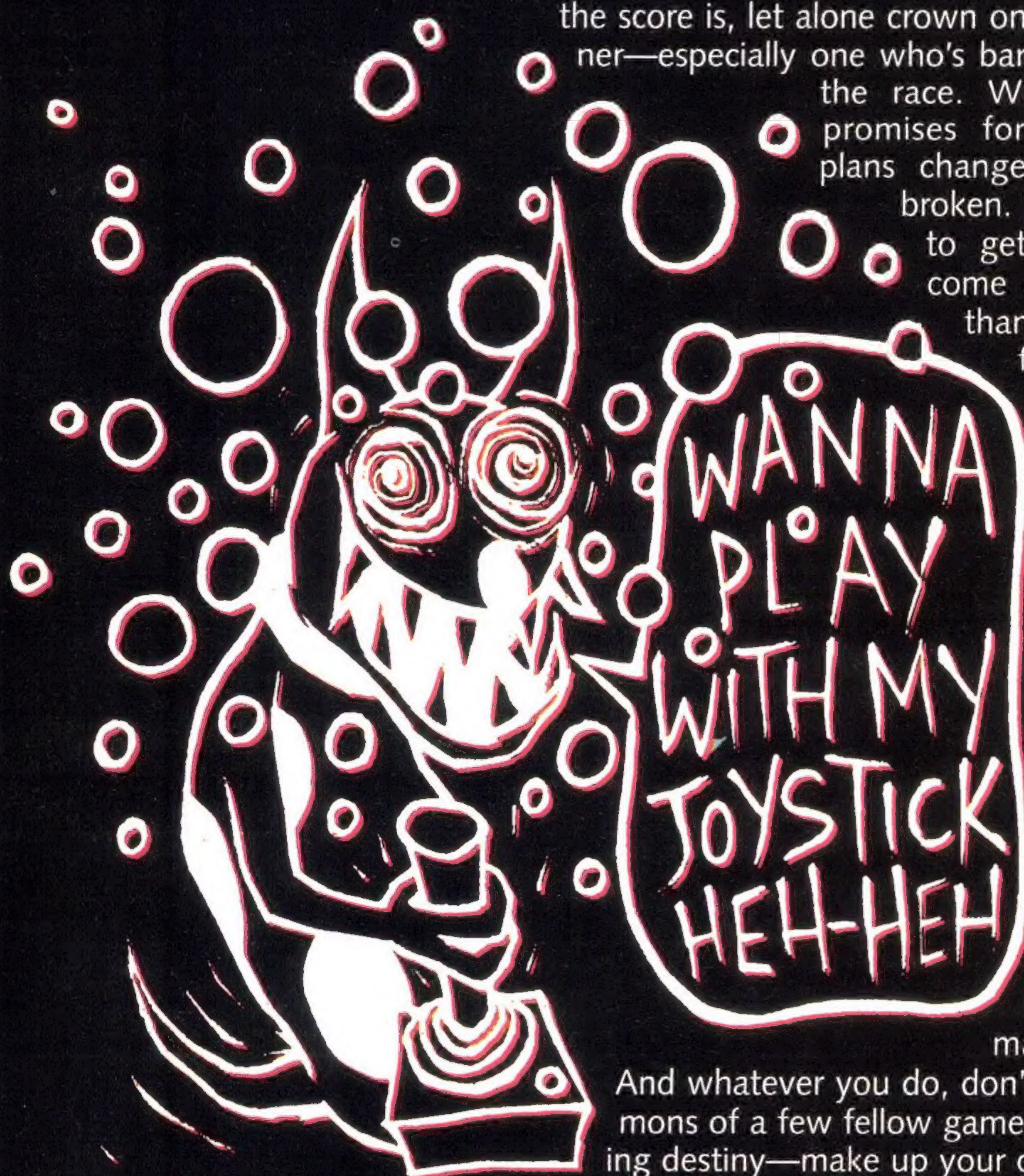
Maybe it's the promise of better technology than what's available now. Maybe it's the lower-than-low price of \$250. Maybe it's the puddle of drool that collects on the floor after seeing arcade teasers like *Killer Instinct* and *Cruis'n USA*. Or maybe it's just blind faith—you know, the kind of stuff usually found in scientology churches. Other game companies have fans, but the Big N has zealots—seemingly brainwashed believers hell-bent on delivering The Gaming Truth to the unenlightened (that means you, Genesisies). And, just like those fruitcakes that come knocking on your door spewing religious psycho babble, these aggressively preachy Nintendites can get pretty damned annoying.

Now, Nintendo's track record is excellent—a steady stream of top-notch games like *Metroid*, *Kid Icarus*, *Pilotwings* and *Donkey Kong Country* have established Nintendo's own creations as the best in the biz. And there's a fair chance that the Ultra 64 will keep that undeniable track record of quality, revolutionize home games as we know them, and blow everything else on the market to smithereens. There's also a fair chance that, by the time the system makes it to your living room, uh, no sooner than April, all the anticipation will backfire, and the game world will shrug its collective shoulders and react with, "This is it?" (This is commonly known as "The MK3 Syndrome.")

The bottom line is this: It's way too early to know what the score is, let alone crown one company the winner—especially one who's barely officially entered the race. While the plans and promises for Ultra look good, plans change and promises are broken. We'll be first in line to get Ultras when they come out, uh, no sooner than April, and we'll be first to praise the system if it's as cool as it could be. But this *isn't* church. This is FLUX, which is about as far away from church as you can get. Here, you don't have to believe anything you haven't seen with your own eyes. Stay skeptical and open—there are some killer systems out there which are, amazingly enough, not made by Nintendo.

And whatever you do, don't let the intense sermons of a few fellow gamers choose your gaming destiny—make up your own mind!

—THE FLUX EDITORS



FLUX

ISSUE #6

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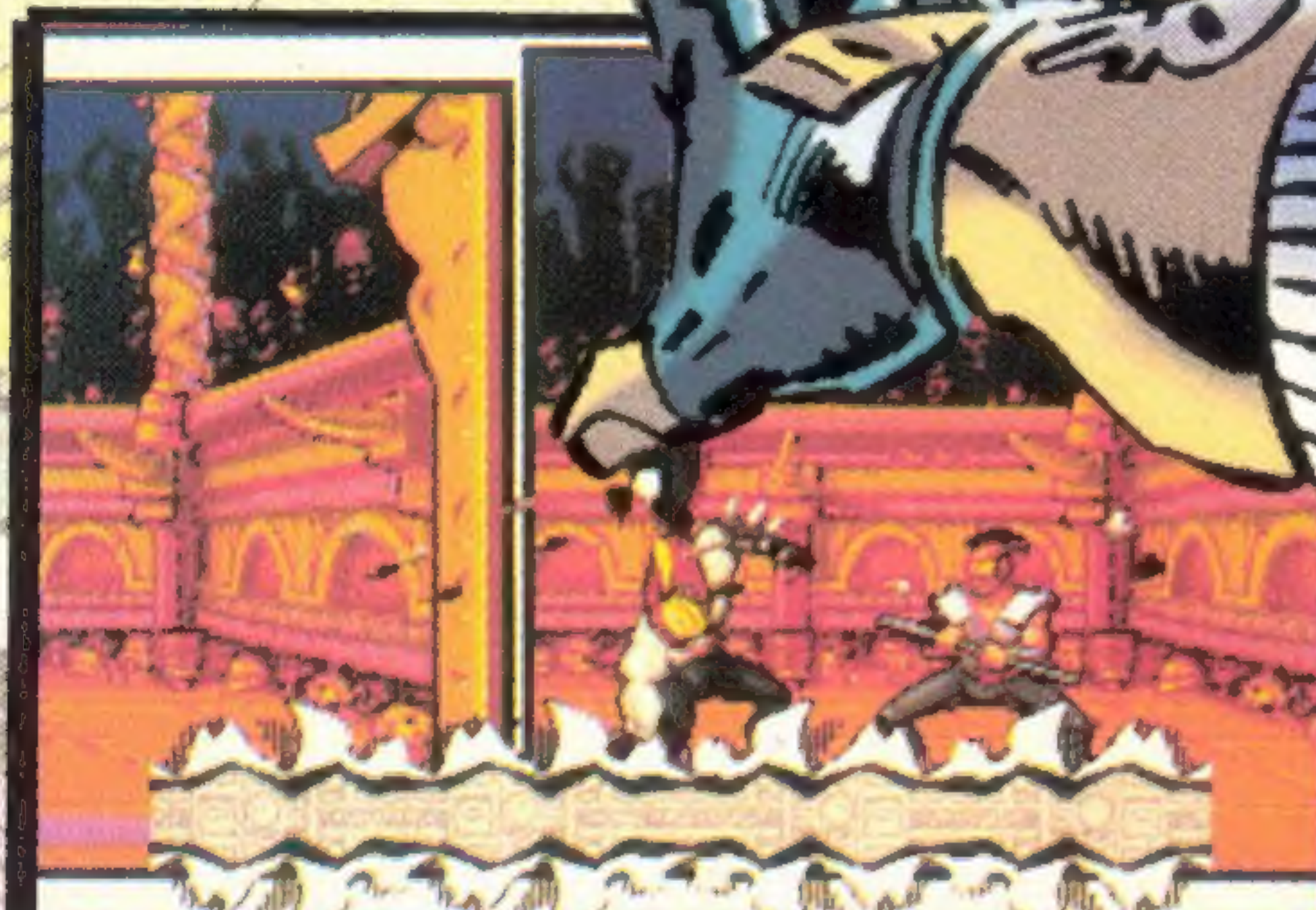
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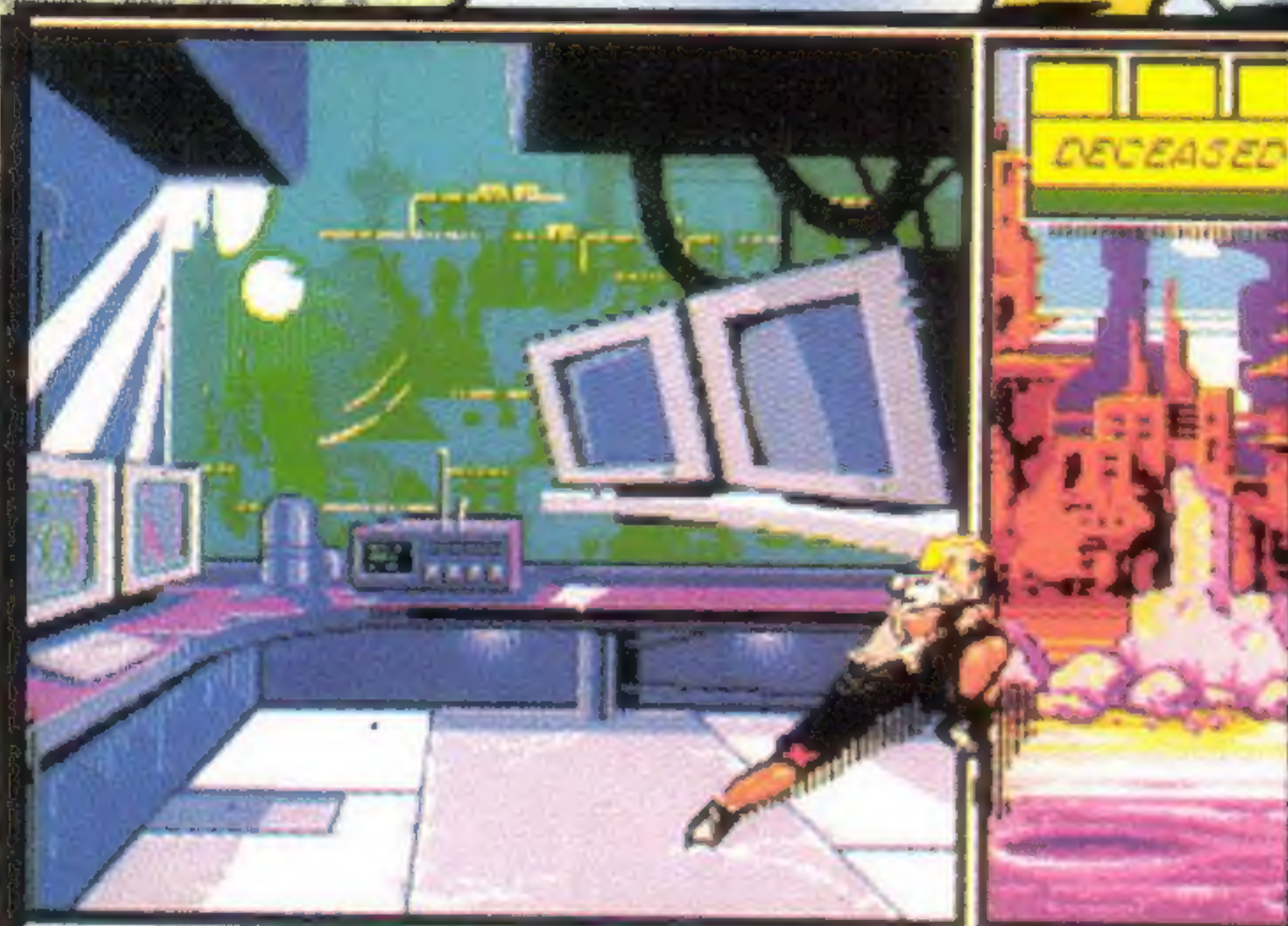
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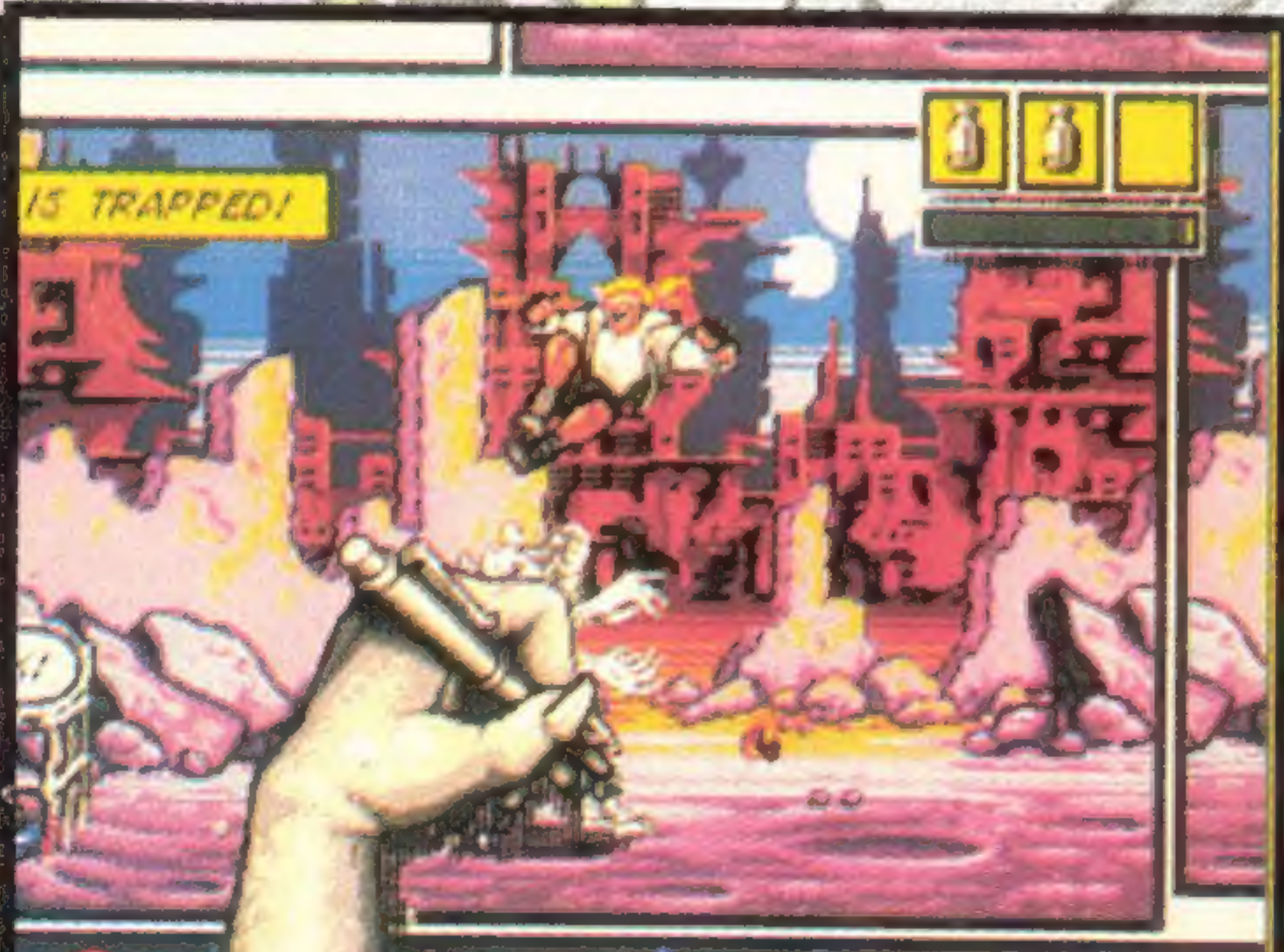
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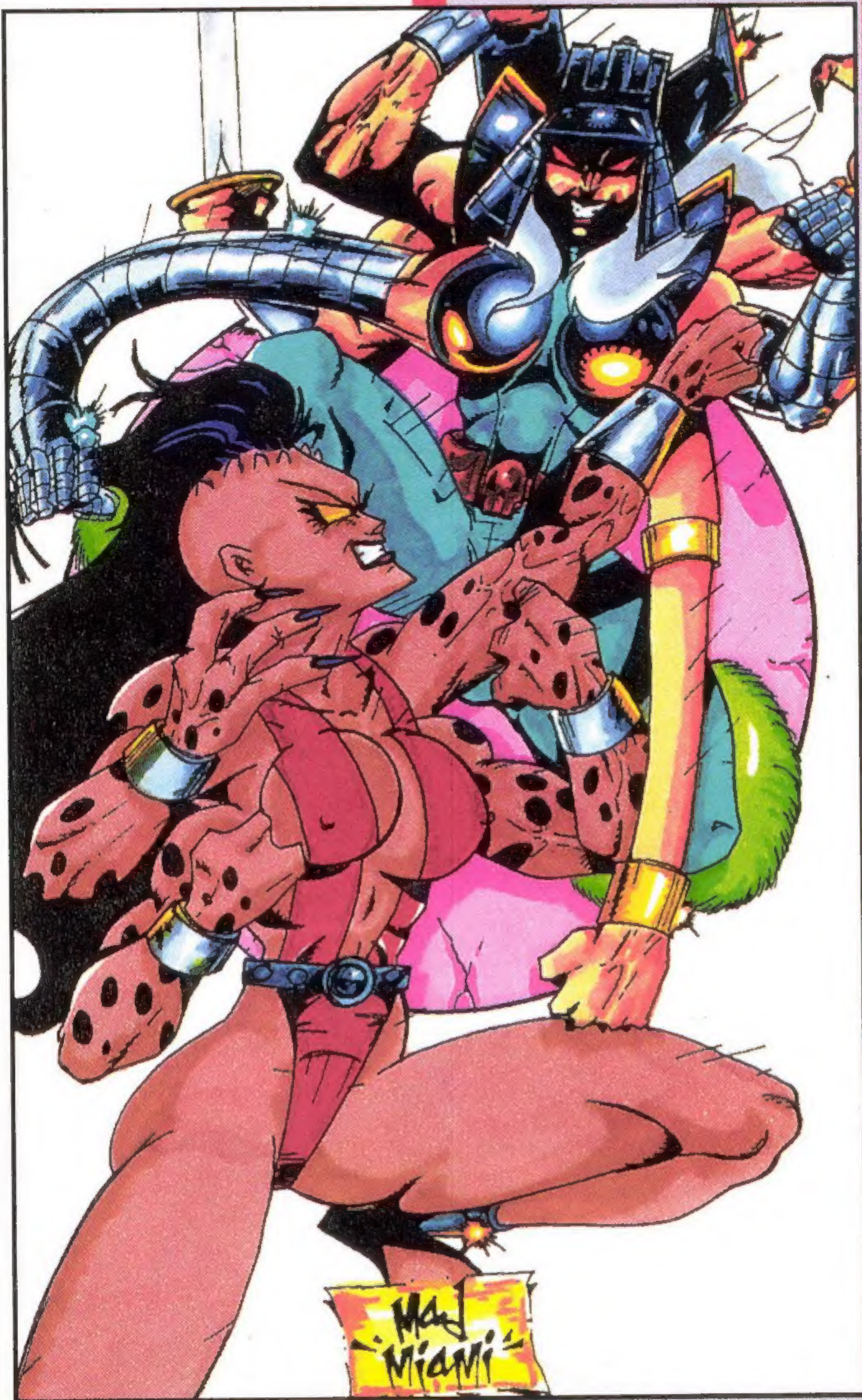
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Backlash



I APPEAL TO YOUR sense of values—if you have any—to clean up your magazine or ditch it and start fresh with something clean. Are you a mother or father raising children? Is this what you would saturate your child's mind with? Is this what you would saturate your own mind with? Come on, wake up—money isn't everything. Try to think of something that would be positive and helpful to youngsters.
—Some upright Person
North Platte, NE

THIS "THING" WHICH you call a magazine is vile, filthy, disgusting and shows many ways

for a person to get in deep trouble. In other words, I love it!
—JONATHAN RICHARDS
Fairfax, VA

TO THE "FEMALE FLUX reader" who wrote a letter in issue #4, FLUX kicks ass! If you don't like it, go back to your friggin' sissy Care Bear books.
—JOSH
via Internet

TO ALL YOU OUT there who agree with the "female FLUX reader" in issue #4—leave us alone! If you want pictures of naked guys, go to the library and look up ancient

Greece!
—CHRIS FUNKHOUSER
Sewickley, PA

Here's a cool code for *Rings Of Power* (Genesis). Before turning on the Genesis, hold down A, B, C, Start and down-right on controller 2. Then turn on the power. After the dog goes by, you see a topless chick! The game sucks, but she's super hot.
—GUY HUNTLEY
Pulaski, TN

I THINK BLOOD IN A fighting game is perfectly natural and healthy. However, I find white "sweat" squirting out of guys' bodies to highly offensive. Please stop replacing blood with white goo—it's gross!
—BLOODSONG
via Internet

WOW. I JUST READ issue #4. Great stuff. The story on female comic book characters was neat (and, amazingly, not as offensive as I would have expected. Nice job!), but I really have to thank you for the feature on the XBAND. As soon as I start working, I'm saving up for



that thing.
—KEVIN SULLIVAN
via Internet

MAN, ALL I HAVE TO say is that your magazine rocks! Screw all those people who don't dig Babewatch—if you don't want to see it, don't buy it! Two words for all the ignorant mothers: you suck!!
—WEEZER
via Internet

I'VE GOT A SUB-scription to FLUX, and I laugh myself silly every time I read an issue! FLUX, without a friggin' doubt, whups more ass than any other magazine out there. Wicked video games, bad-ass music, chicks—you've covered all the bases!
—CAPTAIN WINKY
Beaver, OH

AFTER READING FLUX #4, I tore out all the pages of EGM, EGM2, Nintendo Power and Game Pro and burned them!
—MICHAEL CHAN
Ontario, Canada

YOU HAVE TO TAKE the L out of your title.
—JOHN TRACY
via Internet

FLUX NEEDS A SPOKESWOMAN! THINK YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO DRAW HER? IF SO, PROVE IT! WE'RE INVITING ALL OUR READERS TO SHOW US THEIR ULTIMATE FANTASY FLUX-WOMAN. THE BEST PIECES OF ART WILL BE PRINTED IN FLUX #7. FLUX 1115 BROADWAY, 8TH FL., NY, NY 10010 ATTN: FLUXWOMAN



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Static

stuff that doesn't suck

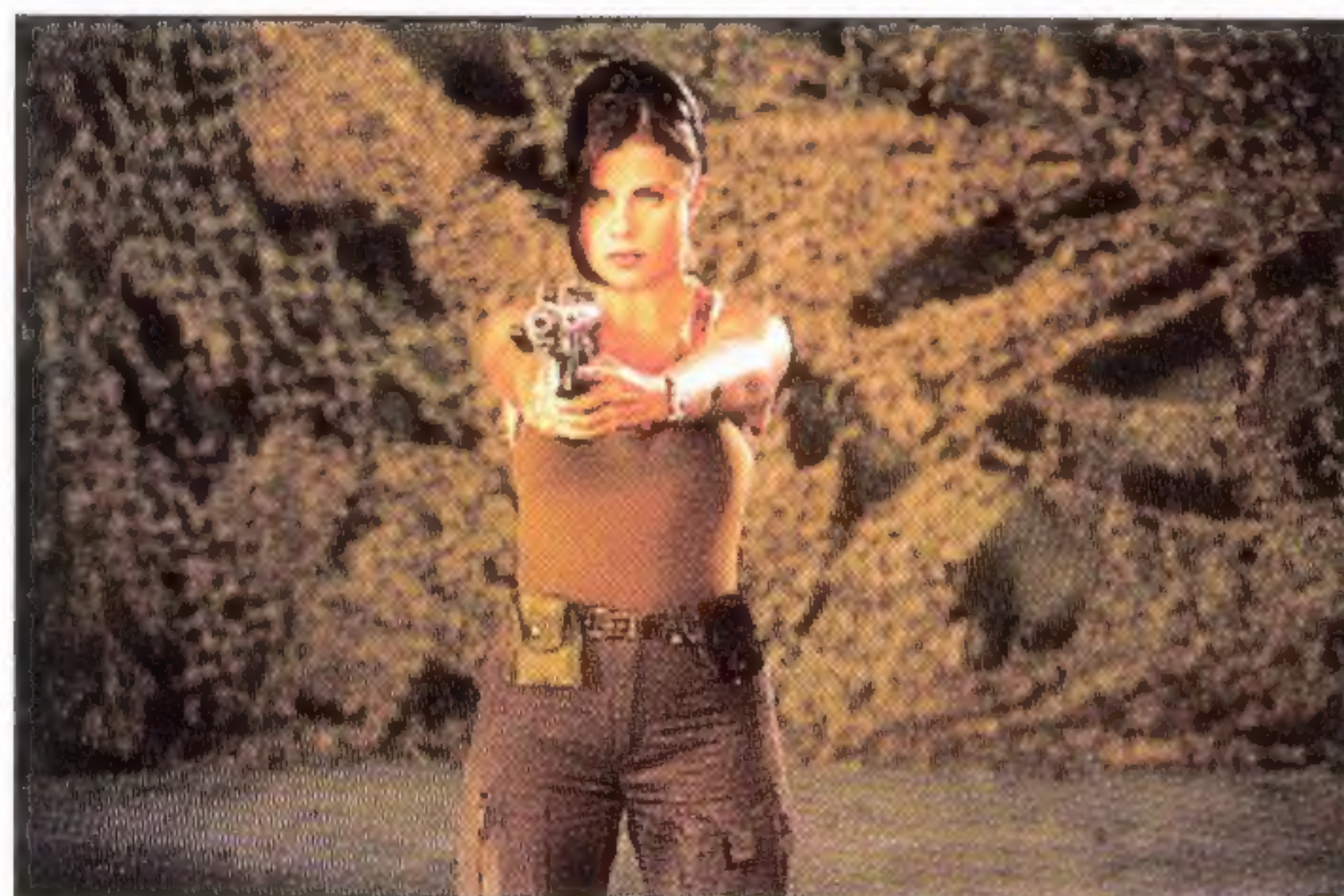
GIRL TROUBLE

FLUX gets interactive with Baywatch goddess—and star of new PC CD-ROM game *Maximum Surge*—Yasmine Bleeth
by **JEFFKITTS**

Pamela shmamela.

For our money, *Baywatch* bathing beauty Yasmine Bleeth is the crown jewel of television drama. Sweet, sexy and smart (she's bi-lingual, ya know), Ms. Bleeth has all the qualities one could ask for in an object of desire. But there's another side to Yasmine Bleeth you're probably not aware of—the side that can leap over hurtles in a single bound and then gun you down at 50 yards. This brash alter-ego of the normally demure Bleeth can be seen this November in *Maximum Surge*, a new PC CD-ROM/Sega Saturn/3DO interactive adventure game from Digital Pictures.

Bleeth, who co-stars in *Maximum Surge* with veteran actor Walter Koenig (*Star Trek's* Chekov), plays Jo, a 21st Century bounty hunter with an itchy trigger finger. The player assumes the role of a mercenary hired to protect the Brokaw Territory and hunt down Drexel (Chekov), a power-hungry dictator. In this exclusive interview, Yasmine Bleeth talks to FLUX about her role in *Maximum Surge*.



Yasmine Bleeth as Jo in *Maximum Surge* (Digital Pictures)



FLUX: What made you want to do a CD-ROM game?

YASMINE BLEETH: I did it because it was a new character for me to play—I thought it would be fun to play a bounty hunter. She's a real tough girl, but it's like comic book tough. It was about as unglamorous a role as I've ever played—very little makeup and pseudo army fatigues, although a little tighter than most. *[laughs]*

FLUX: Is filming a CD-ROM game like *Maximum Surge* much different from filming a TV series like *Baywatch*?

BLEETH: Yeah, it is, because you have to do the same scene about five different ways, depending on the way the game is played. So it can get a little monotonous.

FLUX: Do you get to shoot anybody in the game?

BLEETH: Oh, yeah—all I do is shoot! *[laughs]*

FLUX: Did you enjoy shooting a gun?

BLEETH: I loved it! The whole thing was done very quickly—about three and a half weeks. And I wish I had gotten some time to practice with a gun beforehand because I'm not a real big gun person; I've never really had the opportunity to shoot. But I picked it up pretty quickly. I had a real gun for the game and a fake one for rehearsals, and the real one actually shot explosives—so that was fun. One of the things that really concerned me about the job was that I was going to have to shoot humans in the game, but I didn't want to do that, so I made sure in my contract that I only killed aliens.

FLUX: Do the game players ever get to shoot you?

BLEETH: That's another thing you can't do—no. I just didn't want some obsessed fan playing the game and killing me over and over; I didn't want to give anybody any weird ideas. *[laughs]* So I can't be killed, but there's one point where, if you mess up, you can shoot me in the leg by accident—but I can't die. You also can't have sex with me. *[laughs]*

FLUX: What's your favorite line in the game?

BLEETH: Oh...I had so many of these wonderful one-liners. Like, "It's your turn to die, sucker!" My favorite thing, though, was getting mad at the player when he screws up. I say things like, "You suck!" or "You call that shooting? You shoot like a girl!"



Flux exclusive!



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Doom. Super NES®. 22 levels. All the original monsters and weapons. Plus the new FX2 chip. So strap on your ammo and

You.

Capisce?



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start spitting lead because the only thing that sucks worse than the pay are the odds. **Doomsday, 09. 01. 95.**

MK3 KOMES TO PC!

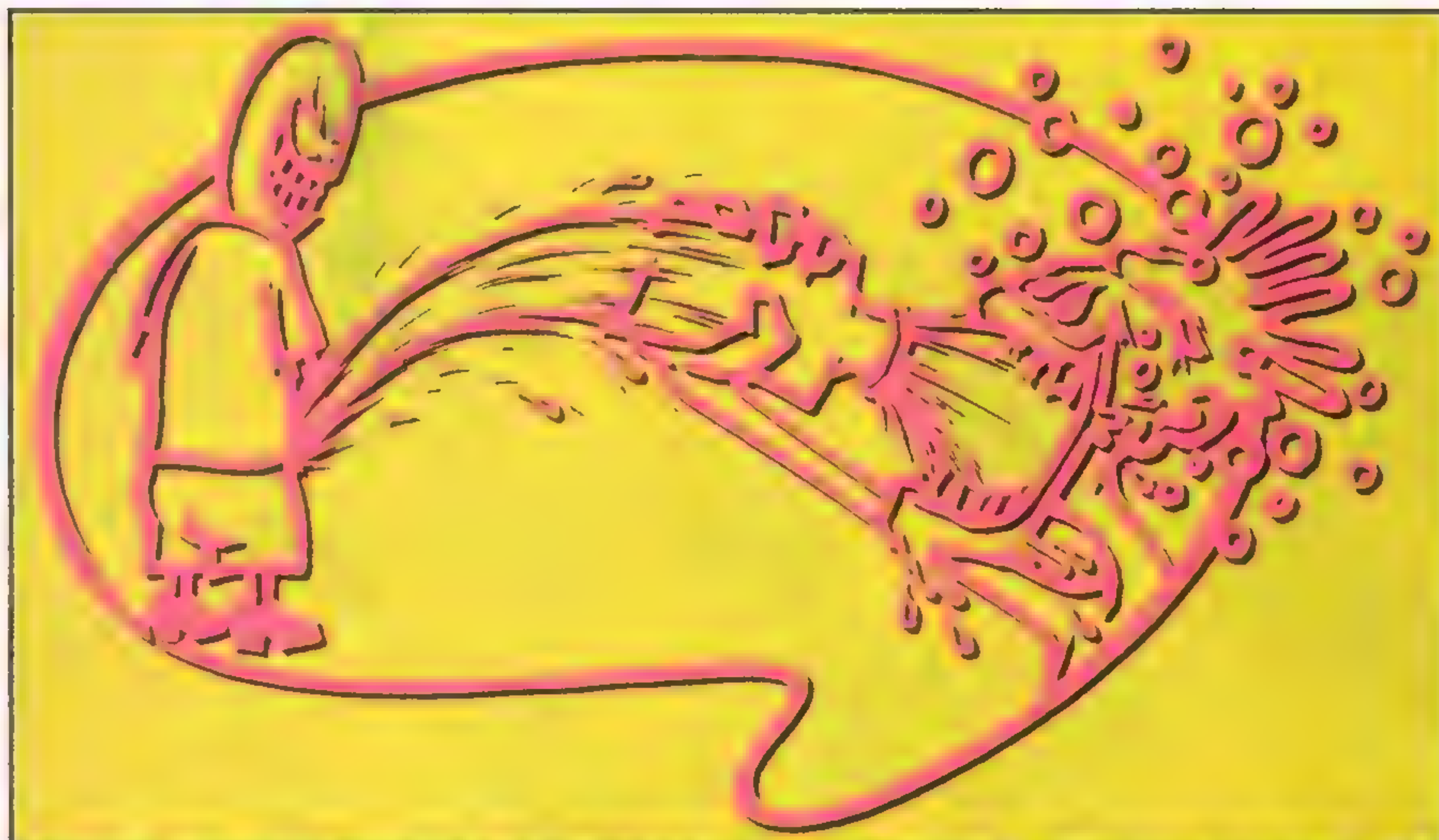
THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM? AFTER MORTAL KOMBAT

and *MKII* hit the PC with varying degrees of dazzle and playability, it looks like *Mortal Kombat 3* has the goods that the ever-growing legion of PC gamers crave.

Sure, all the characters, moves and sounds from the arcade are in there (and lookin' pretty good in standard VGA), but what's a home version without a few perks? Look for some new six-icon "kombination lock" codes and a change in the Ultimate Kombat Kode—as *MK3* programmer Ed Boon points out, "Everybody knows the code for Smoke, so it would be kind of pointless to have players put it in once and then never use the UKK again." Smoke will still be a playable character, though, along with bosses like Motaro and Shao Khan—at last.

Taking a cue from a bunch of other popular PC games, *MK3* will also support modem and network play. Two players can beat each other to a virtual pulp over a phone line, and up to eight players can hold a tournament over a local-area PC network to determine the King of Kombat.

While showing a surprisingly playable pre-alpha version of the program on a humble 486DX2/66, Ed Boon said that the completed *MK3* PC port "will blow the SNES version away." Better hold on to something, then—the PC CD-ROM of *Mortal Kombat 3* storms into stores with its 16-bit brothers on Mortal Friday, October 13. —DAN AMRICH



DON'T EVER DO THIS

Never urinate in the Listerine bottle while at the home of someone you don't like. Because Listerine looks like urine and will disguise the smell of the piss, mouth-rinsers will never notice.

DOOMSDAY

Just when you thought you'd seen everything there is to see in the mighty *DOOM*, along comes *The Ultimate DOOM* from id software. This PC CD-ROM gives you the 27 bloody episodes from the original *DOOM*, plus an all-new fourth episode called "Thy Flesh Consumed." Featuring nine gore-filled new episodes, "Thy Flesh Consumed" features some of the hardest shotgun-blastin' action ever seen in a 3D shooter. We're talking invisible demons, limited ammo, confusing mazes, impossible staircases and even a mighty CyberDemon—all in the first two levels! And



as an added bonus, *The Ultimate DOOM* gives you five free hours on DWANGO, the computer network that hooks you up with others who also want to engage in a two, three or four-way DeathMatch. Happy hunting.

Carrey 2 Toon

THE MASK IS COMING TO SATURDAY

mornings. That's right, last year's hit movie that starred elastic funnyman Jim Carrey is being transformed into an animated series that's scheduled to debut on CBS television later this month. The series will feature the infinitely stretchable Stanley Ipkiss and his pal Milo the Wonder Dog, plus a slew of new characters, fighting crime on the troublesome streets of Edge City. The voice of Ipkiss will be provided by Rob Paulsen.



PATIENCE

IS A

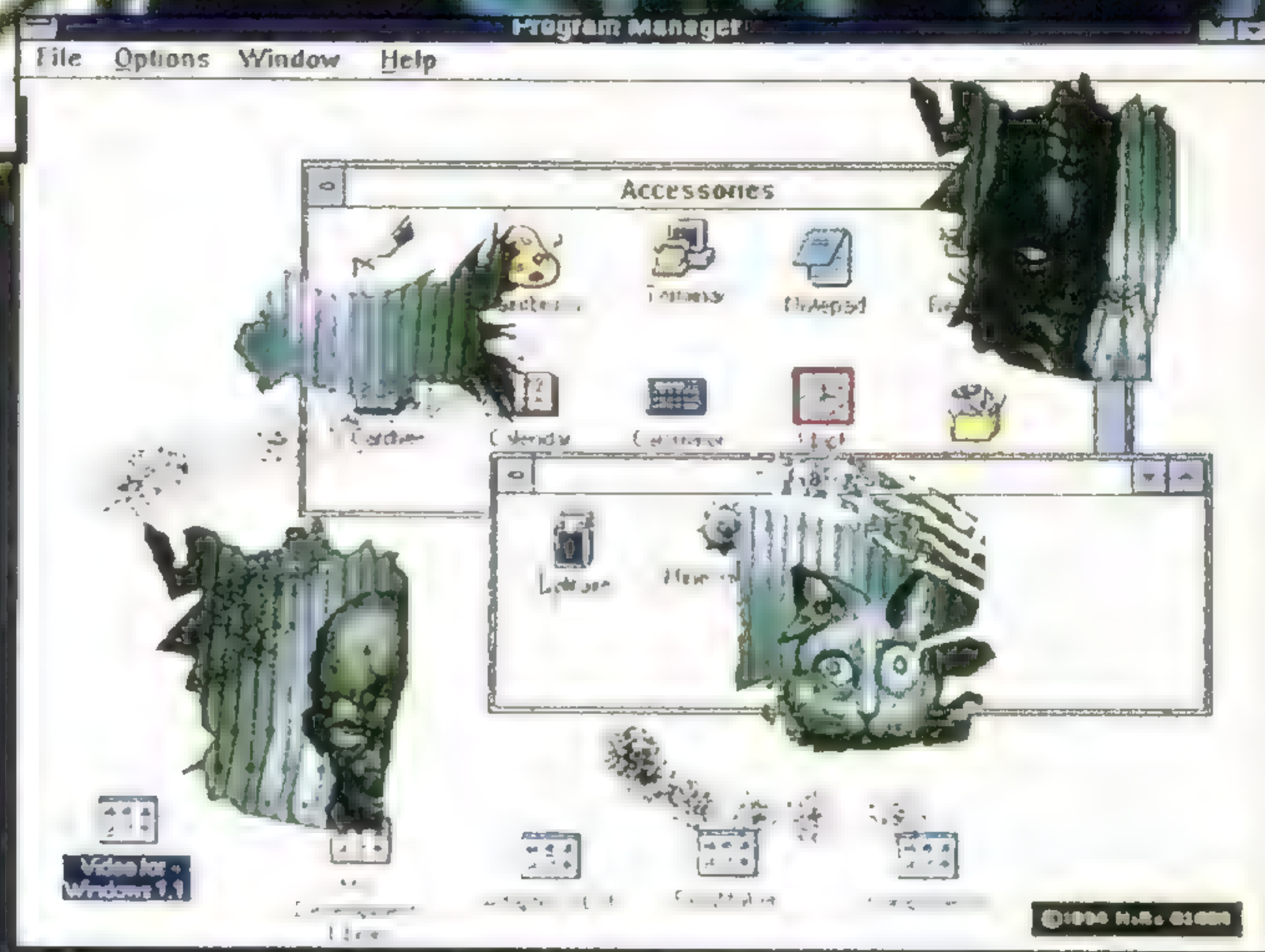
VIRTUA



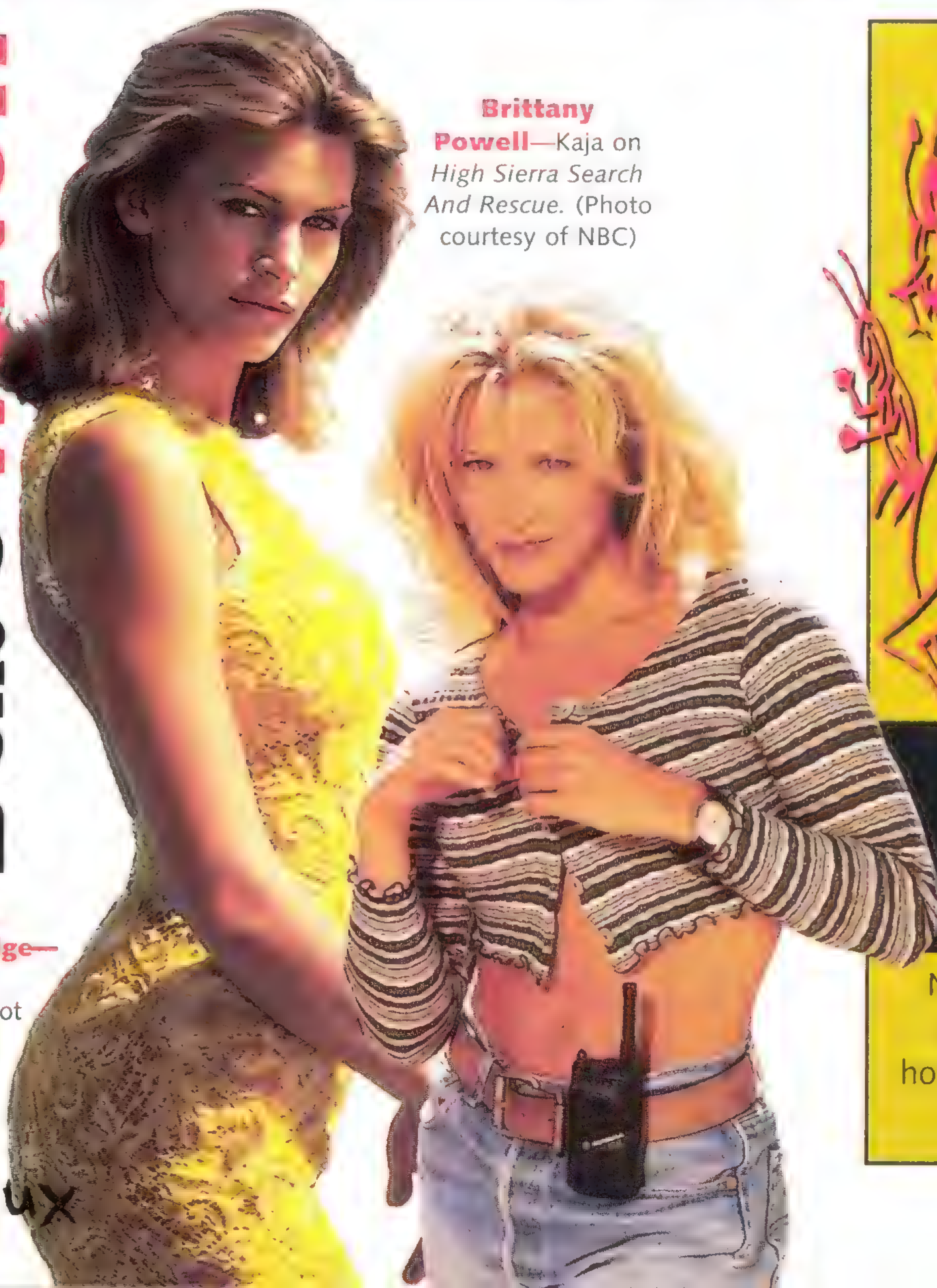


BE AFRAID...

SWISS ARTIST H.R. GIGER'S DARK, BROODING IMAGES HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF MANY feature films, including *Alien*, *Poltergeist II* and the recent *Species*—not to mention the source of many childhood nightmares. Now, thanks to the *H.R. Giger Screen Saver* from MGM Interactive, Giger's horrific artwork can now be viewed right on your computer screen. The *H.R. Giger Screen Saver* brings the surrealist's brush strokes to life through SVGA graphics, spectacular animation sequences, chilling sound effects and eerie music. A short story by award-winning writer Harlan Ellison provides background on how and why Giger's images have come to inhabit the user's computer screen. The PC version is available now for \$19.95, with a Macintosh version scheduled for release this fall.



Babewatch



Brittany Powell—Kaja on *High Sierra Search And Rescue*. (Photo courtesy of NBC)

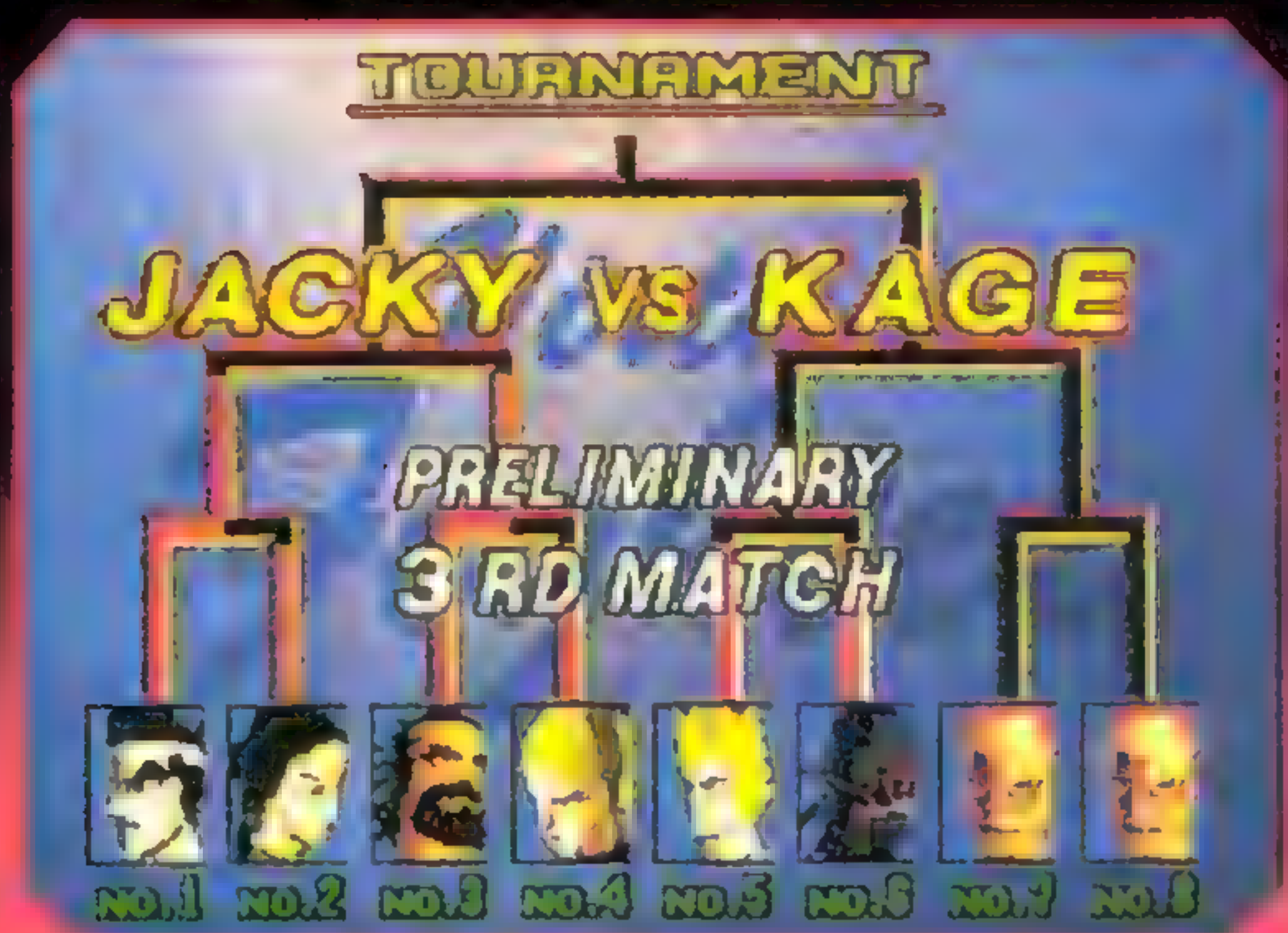
Natasha Henstridge—*Species* alien/sexpot Sil. (Photo courtesy of MGM)



DON'T EVER DO THIS

Never buy a carton of crickets at the pet store and leave it—opened of course—in someone's house. Their family will spend months of sleepless nights before they find them all.

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Your choice. You can wait until Virtua Fighter for 32X is out in the stores like the rest of your friends, or you can get the Special 32X Virtua Fighter Training Pack, get a leg up on the competition and get the game for less! After that, it's every fighter for him or herself!

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SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

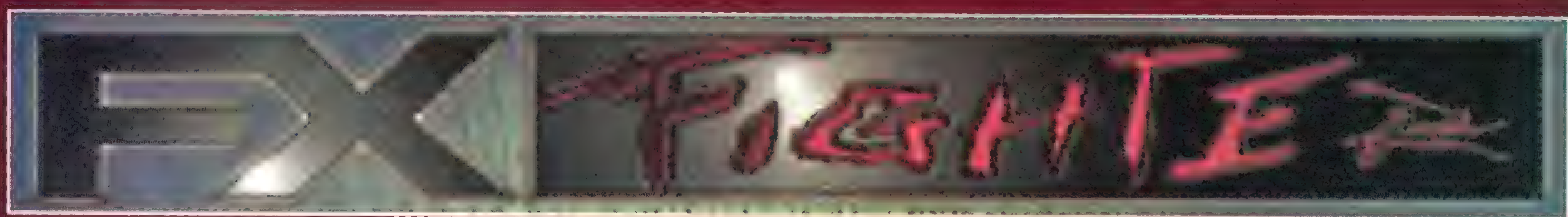
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*No Purchase Necessary. To enter, see Virtua Fighter Special Training Pack (SKU #84704) or hand print your name, complete address, birth date and telephone number on a 3 x 5 card and mail to: Virtua Fighter Promotion, P.O. Box 4714 Hayward, CA 94540-4714 by Dec. 1, 1995. To receive official rules, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Virtua Fighter, c/o Little & King Co. Inc., 140 Broadway, Amityville, NY 11701, by Nov. 15, 1995. Void where prohibited. Estimated retail value of prize structure \$12,000. Sweepstakes ends 12/1/95.

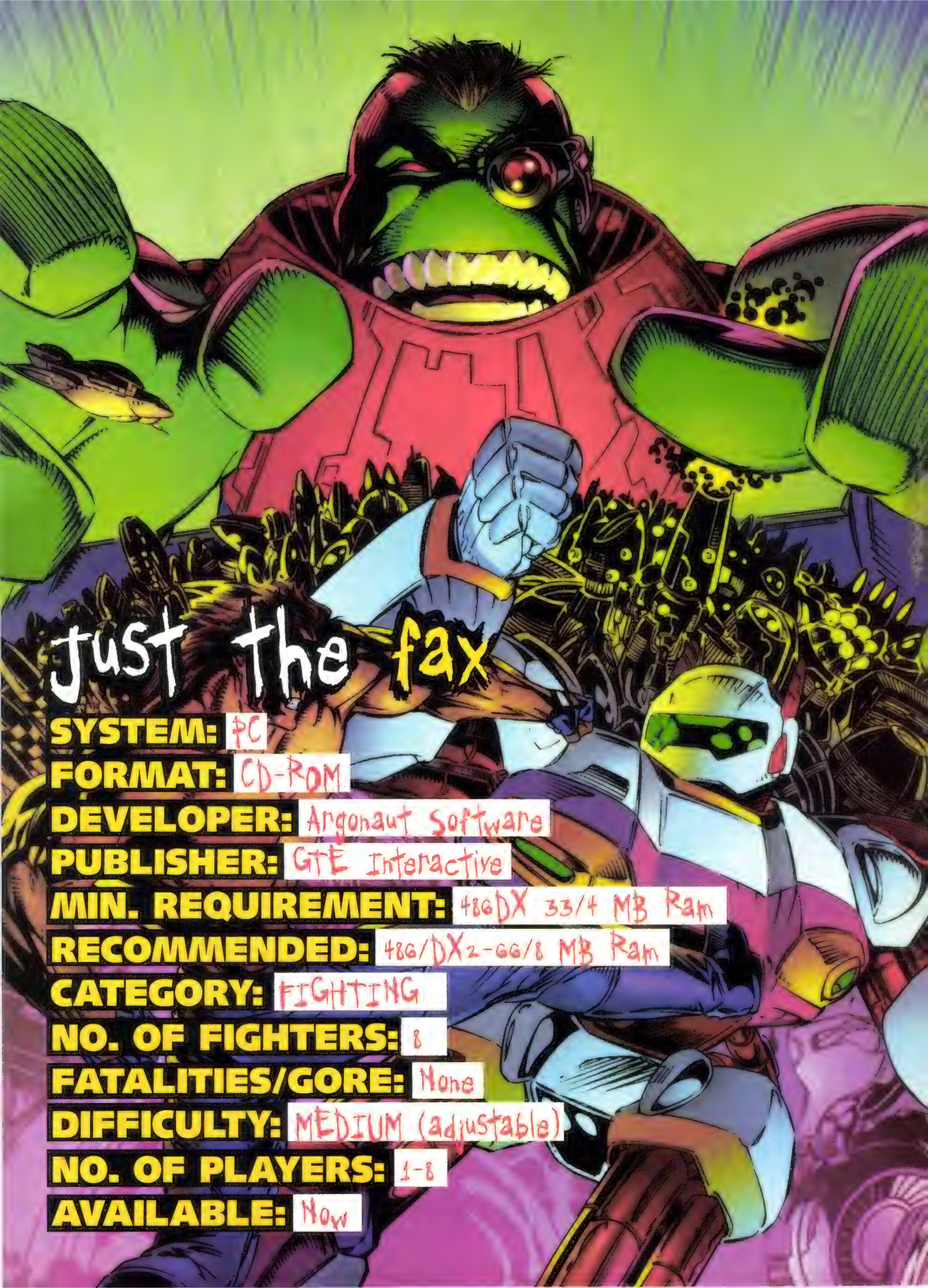
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The fighter's guide to...



From GTE Entertainment—yes, the phone people, of all things—and Argonaut Software (creators of Nintendo's FX chip and SNES games like Star Fox) comes FX Fighter, a 3-D, Virtua Fighter-style fighting game for the PC. Using a new rendering technology known as B-Render (or "Blazing Render")—as well as "motion capture" digital body movement recording—FX Fighter offers eight otherworldly characters fighting in a 3-D environment complete with rotating camera angles and independently-moving backgrounds. The combat action takes place in eight different arenas on eight different planets against some truly bizarre creatures including cyborgs, spirits, robots and insectoids. The game even comes with a mini FX Fighter comic book created by the fine artists at Jim Lee's (WildC.A.T.s) WildStorm Productions!



just the fax

SYSTEM: PC

FORMAT: CD-ROM

DEVELOPER: Angonaut Software

PUBLISHER: GTE Interactive

MIN. REQUIREMENT: 486DX 33/4 MB Ram

RECOMMENDED: 486/DX2-66/8 MB Ram

CATEGORY: FIGHTING

NO. OF FIGHTERS: 8

FATALITIES/GORE: None

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM (adjustable)

NO. OF PLAYERS: 1-8

AVAILABLE: Now

FX FIGHTER COMPLETE MOVE LIST!

ASHRAF

2x PUNCH TO KICK = F, B, P
TURN AND THROW = F, U+P (up close)
BACK BREAK THROW = F, D, P/D+P
ENERGY PUSH = F, D, F+P (cheapest move ever!)
FIREBALL = B, F+P
JUMPING ROUNDHOUSE = U, K
CROSS BODY BLOW = F+P
HAND SPRING LEAP KICK = F, B, D+K
SWIPE PUNCH = D+P
ELBOW CHARGE = F, D, P
SCORPION KICKS = F, B+K
HEAVY UPPERCUT = B, P
MID KICK = F/D+K
QUICK KICK = B/D+K

VENAM

SWIPE PUNCH = F, P
UPPERCUT = B, P
KNEE STRIKE = B, K
TWIRLING PUNCH = F, B, P
FACE BITE = B, D, F+P (up close)
POISON SPIT = B, F, P
OVERHEAD THROW = F, D+P (up close)
LEG THROW = B, F+K (up close)
QUICK KICK = F/D+K
ROLL ADVANCE = F, F, D

SHEBA

SWIPE CLAW = F+P
HEAVY CLAW SLASH = B, P
CARTWHEEL KICK = B+K
DOUBLE HAND UPPERCUT = F, D+P
JUMPING SPIN KICK = B, F+K
LOW PUNCH = D+P
LEG RAKE THROW = F, D+K
FRANK N STEINER = F, F, K
JUMPING ROUNDHOUSE = U, K
SHEBA'S CROUCHED MOVES
HEAVY CLAWS = P, P
FACE RAKE = F+K
CLAW CHARGE = F+P
FOOT CHARGE = F, B+K



aSHRaF



aSHRaF takes on CYBEN 30



VENaM is awfully dangerous...for a praying mantis



Frisky SHEBa vs. JaKE



1.



2.



3.

Can you match the guitar with the fit of the jeans?



A. Classic 505®



B. Relaxed 550™



C. Loose 560™



Need clues? Levi's® 505® jeans are made long and straight. Levi's 550™ jeans are made a little fatter. And Levi's 560™ jeans are made even bigger. Make your own choice, play your own music. (And for you drummers out there, don't forget to turn the magazine right-side up or you'll end up back at the table of contents.)

KIKO

KNEE TO GROIN = F+K
 KNEE THROW = B, D+P
 TRIPLE KICK = K+K
 MID KICK = F/D+K
 ROUNDHOUSE KICK = B+K
 AXE KICK = F+F
 ROUNDHOUSE SWEEP = D, B+K
 TWO FISTED PUNCH = F+P
 DOUBLE KNEE ATTACK = F, F+P
 JUMP TWO FOOTED KICK = B, F+P
 THROWING STAR = B, F+P
 CIRCLE KICK = D+K
 DOUBLE KICK = F, F+K

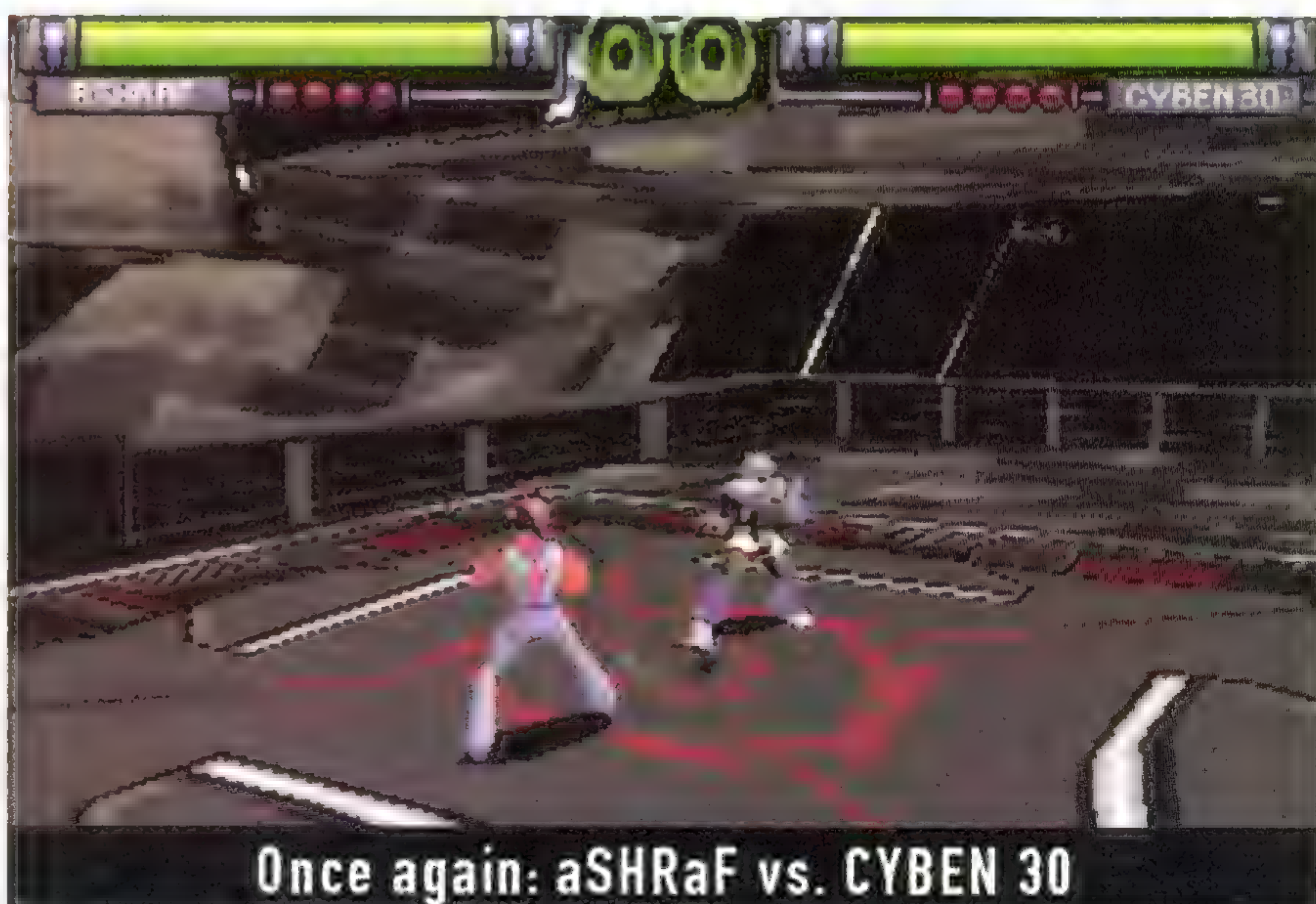
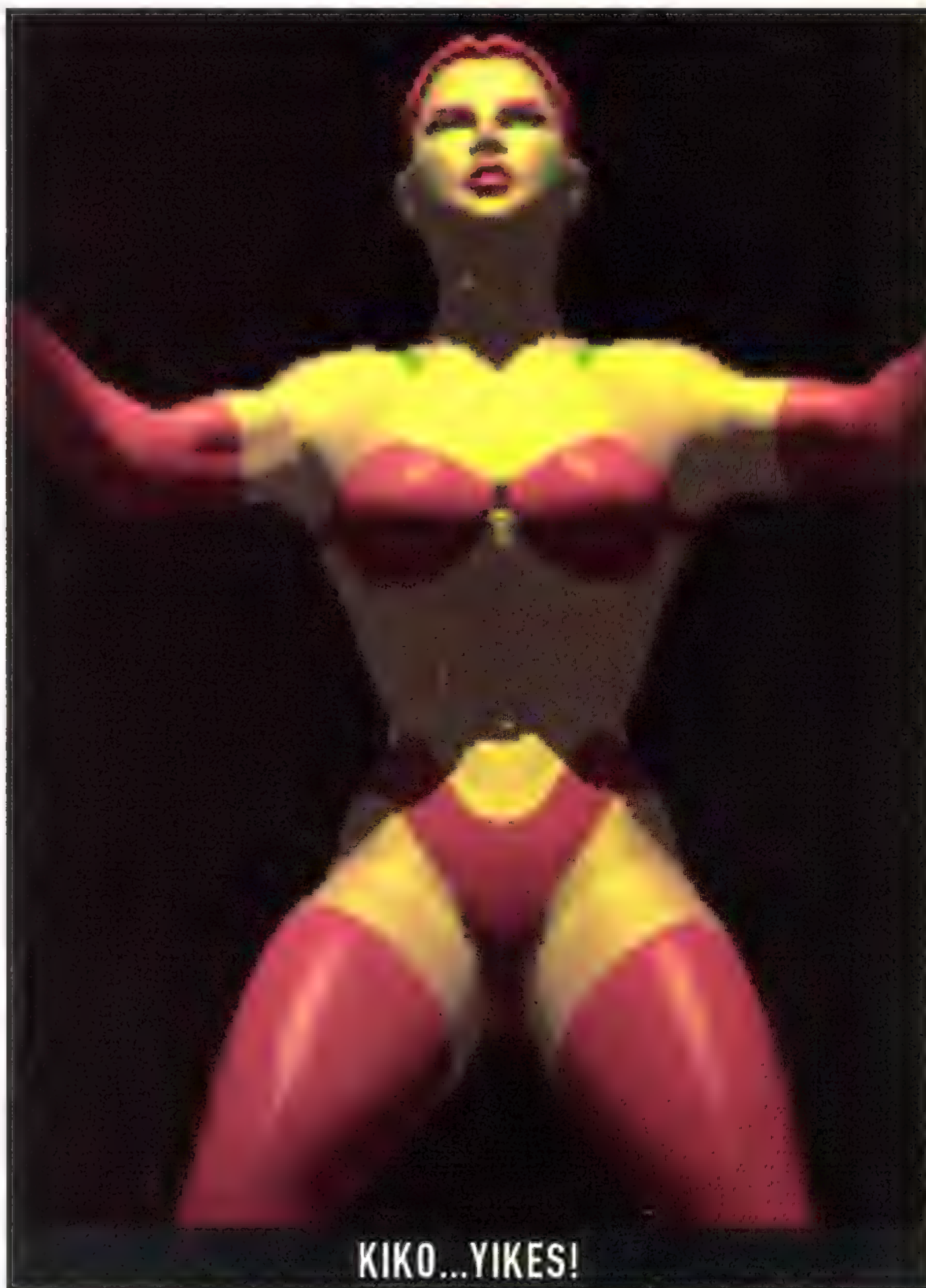
MAGNON

FORWARD ELBOW = F+P
 BEARHUG = B+K
 WINDMILL PUNCH = B, F+P
 DOUBLE STOMP = F, F, K
 TOSS THROW = F, D+P
 ROLL ATTACK = D, F+P (when ducked)
 DOUBLE UPPERCUT = F, F+P
 MID KICK = F/D+K
 QUICK KICK = B, D+K
 ELBOW ATTACK = D+P
 LAVA BREATH = B, F+K
 KNEE ATTACK = F+K
 DOUBLE HIT PUNCH = U+P
 PICKUP THROW = F, D, +P (when at opponent's feet)

CYBEN 30

BLASTOFF THROW = U+P (up close)
 ROTOR ARM ATTACK = F, F+P
 HELI PUNCH = D+P
 ROCKET PUNCH = B, F+P
 MID KICK = F/D+K
 CYBEN SHOCK = F+P (up close)
 ROUNDHOUSE KICK = D+K
 HIGH KICK = F+K
 DOUBLE KICK = F, F+K
 BACK KICK = B+K

continued
 on pg.92



THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO DIE.
ONLY ONE CAN MAKE YOU IMMORTAL.



MK3. BE CAREFUL. IT'S COMING HOME. FRIDAY 13, OCTOBER 1995.

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Head2Head

by Jeff Kitts and Dan Amrich

From **DOOM** to **VIRTUAL POOL**: a comparative look at the best in **multiplayer computer gaming**

Computer gamers who've experienced the full-throttle adrenaline rush of a multiplayer DeathMatch

know there's nothing better than going toe-to-toe against a friend in a gore-filled game of *DOOM*. Dial each other's computer via modem, turn off all Cyberdemons and Imps and hunt each other in any of the game's sprawling levels. And now, with 3-D flying games like *Descent* and *Terminal Velocity* also providing two-player capabilities, multiplayer contests have become the gaming method of choice for computer gamers.

In an effort to make heads or tails of the current crop of multiplayer games, the editors of *FLUX* tied up their phone lines for hours on end and pummeled each other until their heads spun and, in one instance, a high-quality joystick snapped in half! Ah...the wonderful dangers of multiplayer gaming!

DOOM/DOOM II

(id Software)



Most gamers have already gotten their first taste of multiplayer action from the big D. And the Big Kahuna of Carnage didn't get that way by being meek—*DOOM* packs in gobs and gobs of bloody

good action that's only intensified by a head-to-head multiplayer match. Hunting demons is cool, but once you've tasted human flesh, well, you *never* go back.

There are two flavors of multiplayer DeathMatches—modem and network. The modem variety lets you and a friend square off mano-a-mano in any *DOOM* or *DOOM II* level (or choose one of zillions of user-created arenas), with options for respawning weapons (a good idea; that way two players can each have rocket launchers, instead of one person grabbing it, using it up and never being able to shoot it again) and respawning monsters (not a good idea, since you want to fry your pals, not the computer). If you've got an IPX PC network (and you probably don't unless you go to college or a really cool high school) you can load up *DOOM* or *DOOM II* for four-person frenzy—all four players, each wearing their own drab, easily camouflaged color, blasting each other to bloody corpses (which remain where they fall throughout the game, by the way) until one scaredy cat pops the exit. The latest *DOOM* updates come with *DWANGO.EXE*, a program that allows four players to DeathMatch via modem (see sidebar).

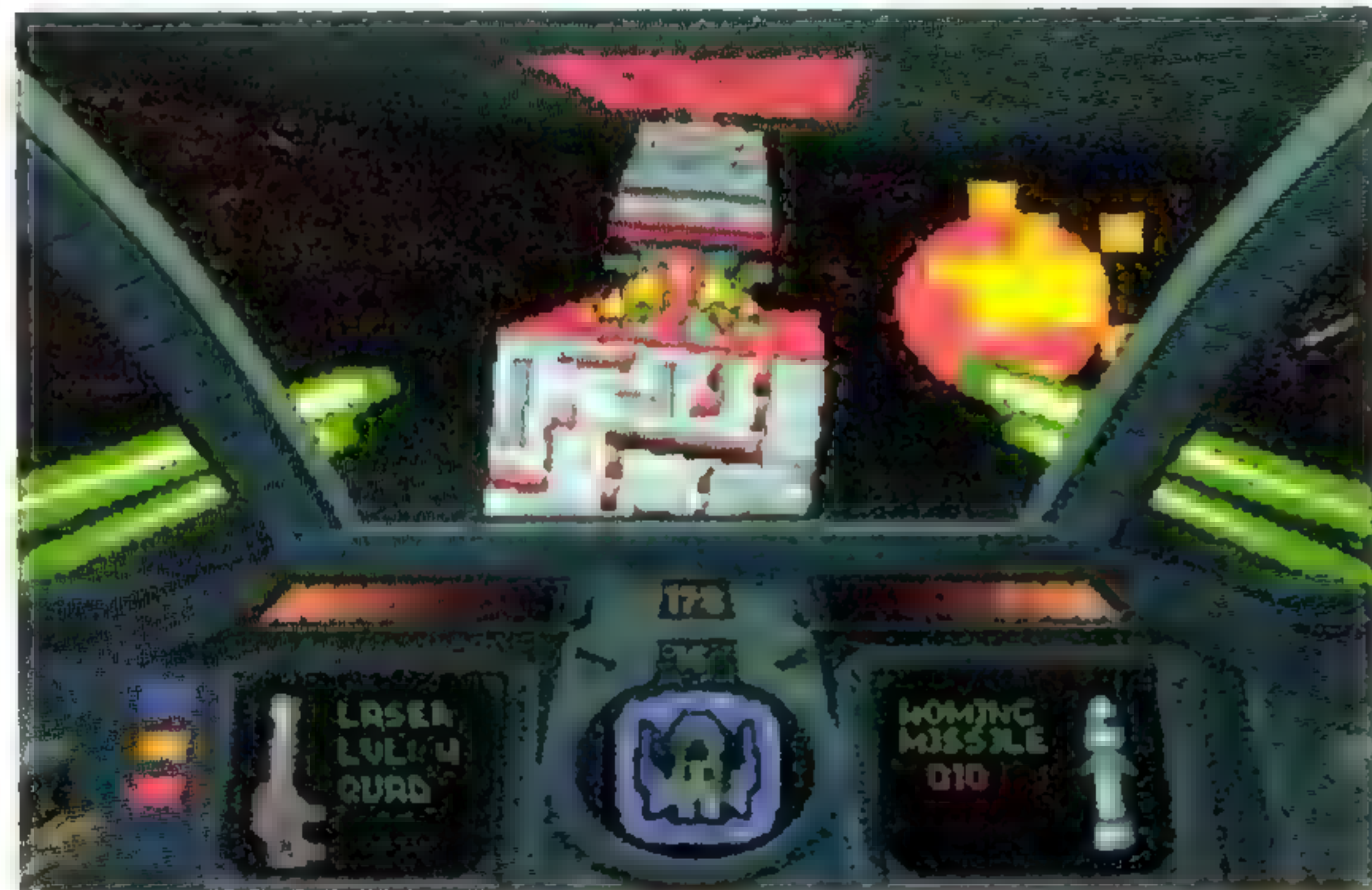
Connecting is relatively simple, though sometimes you'll need to edit the *MODEM.CFG* file to get the modem speed and init strings just right for your setup. As for essential weaponry, rocket launchers make unrivaled sniping tools since they're fast and accurate at long distances. But stay away from the BFG—it's long charge up time tends to hamper its effectiveness in heavy firefights. And a double-barrel

shotgun blast in a face-to-face showdown works wonders, usually splattering your best buddy on the spot.

Ease of connection: Not Bad
DWANGO support: Yes (both)
Minimum modem speed: 9600
Maximum modem speed: 38400
Current *FLUX* Champion: Dan (but Jeff won a large, obnoxious gold-plated medal in his first DeathMatch game ever during a 1994 *DOOM II* press function)

DESCENT (Interplay)

The winding, claustrophobic corridors, awesome weaponry and zero-gravity weightlessness all combine to make *Descent*, hands down, the most thrilling



PC shooter since *DOOM*—and those elements are only strengthened in multiplayer mode. Choose a pre- or custom-made multiplayer level (which are different from the game's regular one-player levels), take away the usual horde of enemy ships and you and an opponent can go head-to-head in *Descent's* miles of sprawling mine shafts, volcanic pits and narrow tunnels. Weapons range from simple blasters and stationary mines that float in mid-air to homing missiles and instant-death projectiles like the Mega Missile. Stockpiling weapons is certainly one of the best ways to rack up kills in *Descent*—but die once and your stash stays behind for your assassin to scoop up while you regenerate elsewhere in the mine, armed with only a basic gun.

One useful multiplayer tactic is to stay relatively quiet and hidden. Explore too much and you're liable to run directly in your opponent's line of fire or simply lose your bearings in *Descent's* dizzying, end-over-end 3D world—either way spells trouble. You're better off tucking your ship in a dark corner high above the playfield or behind a door, just waiting for your opponent to scream past. The element of surprise is key to wasting your enemy. When it comes to weaponry, your best friends are the Plasma Cannon (which spray large, powerful bursts of green death without draining your energy like the Fusion Cannon) and Homing Missiles (heat-seekers that do wonders at long distances). And of course, unleash the rare but mighty Mega Missile and your opponent is all but toast.

Connect at 38,400 baud (with some 14,400 modems) and *Descent* moves quickly between the two players without so much as a hiccup. We tested *Descent* hour after hour, and the game did not crash, glitch or freeze up even once. Without a doubt, the most riveting and intense multi-player game available.

Ease of connection: Excellent
 DWANGO support: No
 Minimum modem speed: 9600
 Maximum modem speed: 38400
 Current FLUX Champion: Dan (but Jeff is gaining and Dan is scared)

HERETIC

(id/Raven software)

Ye Olde *DOOM*—same smooth game-play engine, but new graphics, weapons, levels, water areas complete with undertow and the nifty ability to look up and down. And given a choice, some *DOOM*ers like *Heretic* more—there are magical weapons, flying enemies and a nice sense of medieval creepiness that no other game can convey.

Setup is like *DOOM*—everything is run from the Setup menu, which is kind of



a drag. In fact, for better or for worse, practically everything here is the same as *DOOM*—DeathMatches, respawning, macros and messages, warping directly to a specific level, the whole bit. The only changes are the medieval surroundings and the appearance of your opponents—instead of the familiar armored Marine, you and your pals appear as robed wizards.

Once again, the shotgun-level weapon (this time an ethereal crossbow that shoots green bolts) is the basic weapon of choice for close combat, but the rune-powered, machine-gun like, fireball-spewing Hellstaff is a better weapon for multiplayer games, since it does rapid damage and blinds your opponent in the process. Grab it and put on a light show.

Ease of connection: Not bad
 DWANGO support: Yes
 Minimum modem speed: 9600
 Maximum modem speed: 38400
 Current FLUX Champion: Even

NASCAR RACING

(Papyrus)

NASCAR Racing may be the undisputed king of computer racing sims, but its strength is playing against the computer—not against another opponent via modem. Here's why: In order to create that one-on-one competitive feel necessary to make a two-player game worth the effort, you must take the computer-controlled cars off the track and simply race against each other. But while this may sound like a blast, the truth is that because the game offers so many different setups for each car and for each track (gear ratios, spoiler angle, tire pressure, etc.), it's difficult to make your car and your opponents' car equal each other in performance and handling. What usually happens in a two-player game of *NASCAR* is that the faster car between the two will pull ahead of the other and not look back until he crosses the finish line—and at that point, the thrill of the race is gone. So why not just leave all the other cars on the track, you ask? Simple: because then you're pretty much racing against the computer, which you can do whenever you want without the aggravation of finding another player and spending money on the phone call.

To really have fun in a two-player



game of *NASCAR*, your best bet is to eliminate the other cars, turn off the "car damage" and "yellow flag" options and simply turn the game into a free-for-all demolition derby. Trust us: barreling down the Talladega straight-aways at 200+ m.p.h. in the opposite direction of your opponent and slamming into him head on (causing shards of metal and busted tires to fly in all directions) is really the only way to fully appreciate *NASCAR's* two-player capabilities.

Ease of connection: Good
 DWANGO support: No
 Minimum modem speed: 9600
 Maximum modem speed: 57600
 Current FLUX Champion: Jeff

RISE OF THE TRIAD

(Apogee)

Better detail than *DOOM*, intense gore and a sick sense of humor have already made *Rise Of The Triad* a fave among death-obsessed gamers. As a member



With the right game,
it's fifty times faster
than any kid's system.



Hear that giant sucking sound? Little brothers everywhere are kissing up to play FX Fighter, the most advanced fighting game ever created for the PC. But before you slam the door on the little Desperado, tell him what he's missing:

•**Arcade Action & Incredible Speed.** FX Fighter was specifically designed to take

advantage of your new Pentium, but it still screams on a 486, too.

•**Real-Time 3D.** FX Fighter is first to use BRender™ technology, the most advanced 3D rendering system ever developed.

•**Real Motion Capture.** We recorded over 350 actual sequences from martial artists

and acrobats for this game. Roundhouse kicks have never been so smooth.

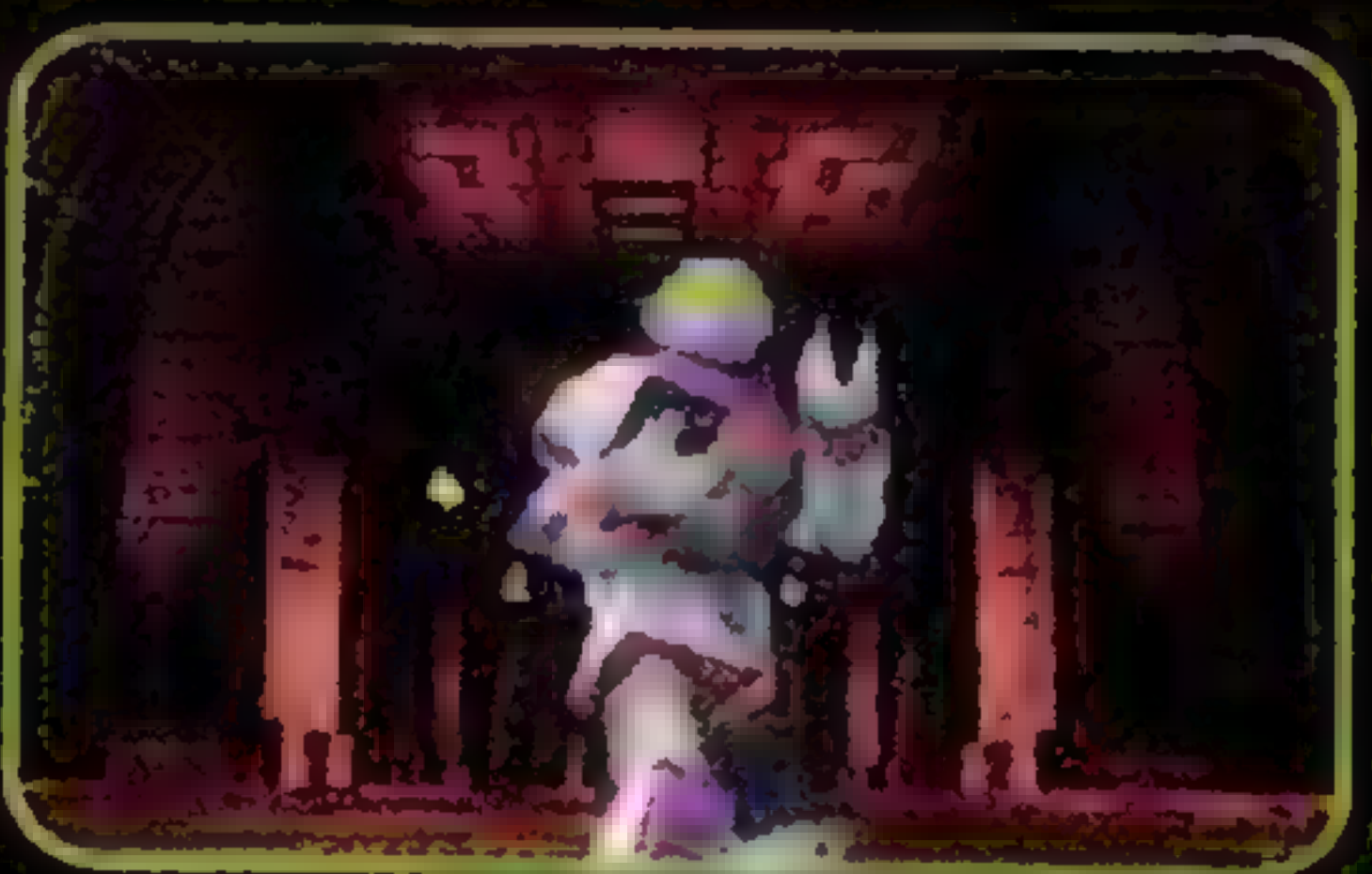
•**Flying Camera.** Forget side-only views. We've got every angle covered—in three dimensions.

•**More Moves.** Choose among eight characters, with over 100 attack moves—including incredible combinations.

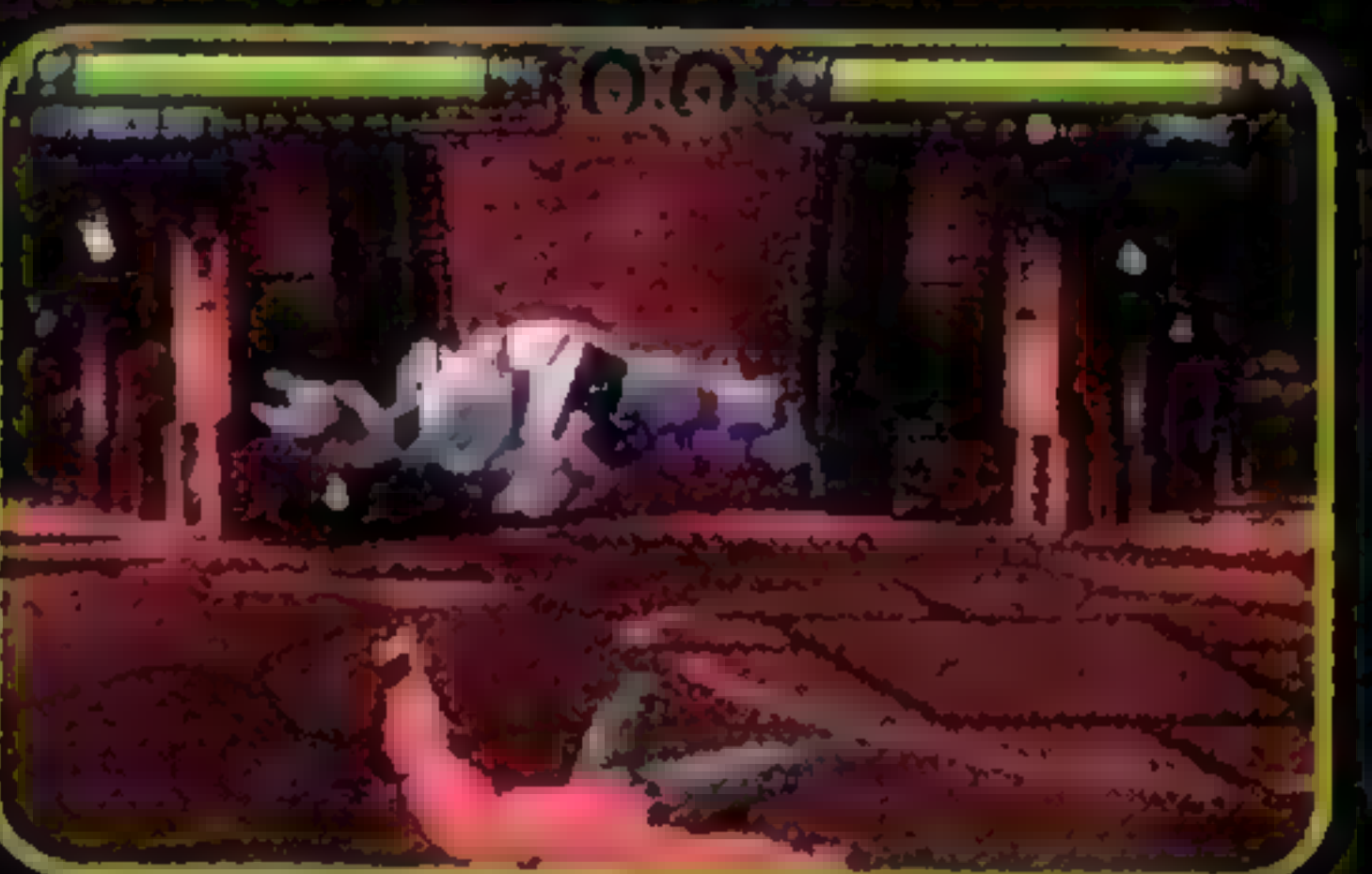
Here's the right game.



Break into a new dimension. Attack, sidestep—even hurl your opponent towards the camera.



Flying 3D Camera. Not just a highlight film, the point-of-view changes as you attack.



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FX FIGHTER™

•I.Q. Points. For about the cost of a two-bit game cart you'll get a superior game with fifty times the speed, four times the color, and twice the resolution. Very smart.

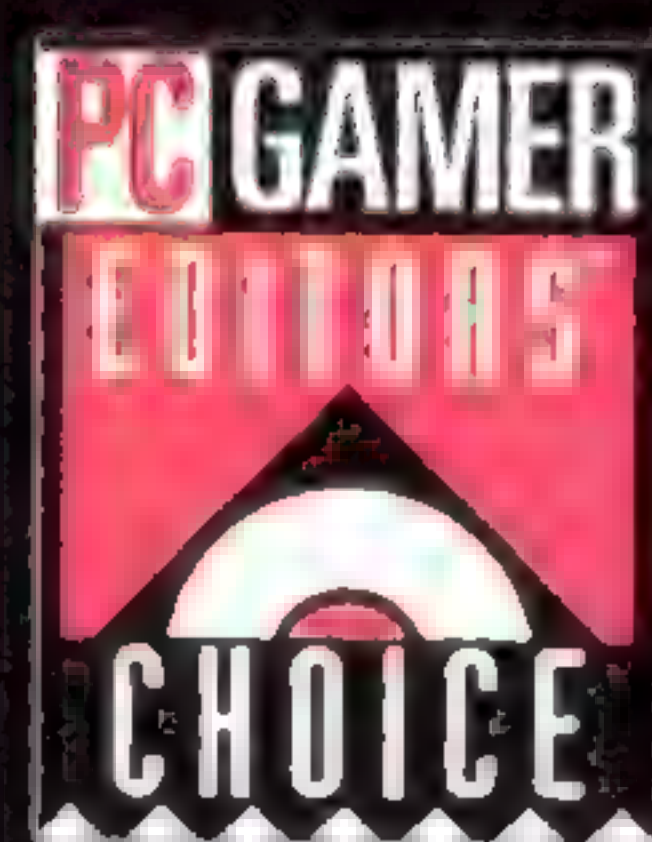
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"The finest fighting game ever created for the PC." — PC GAMER

"The best PC fighting game I have ever played...rivals 32-bit game consoles."

— Next Generation



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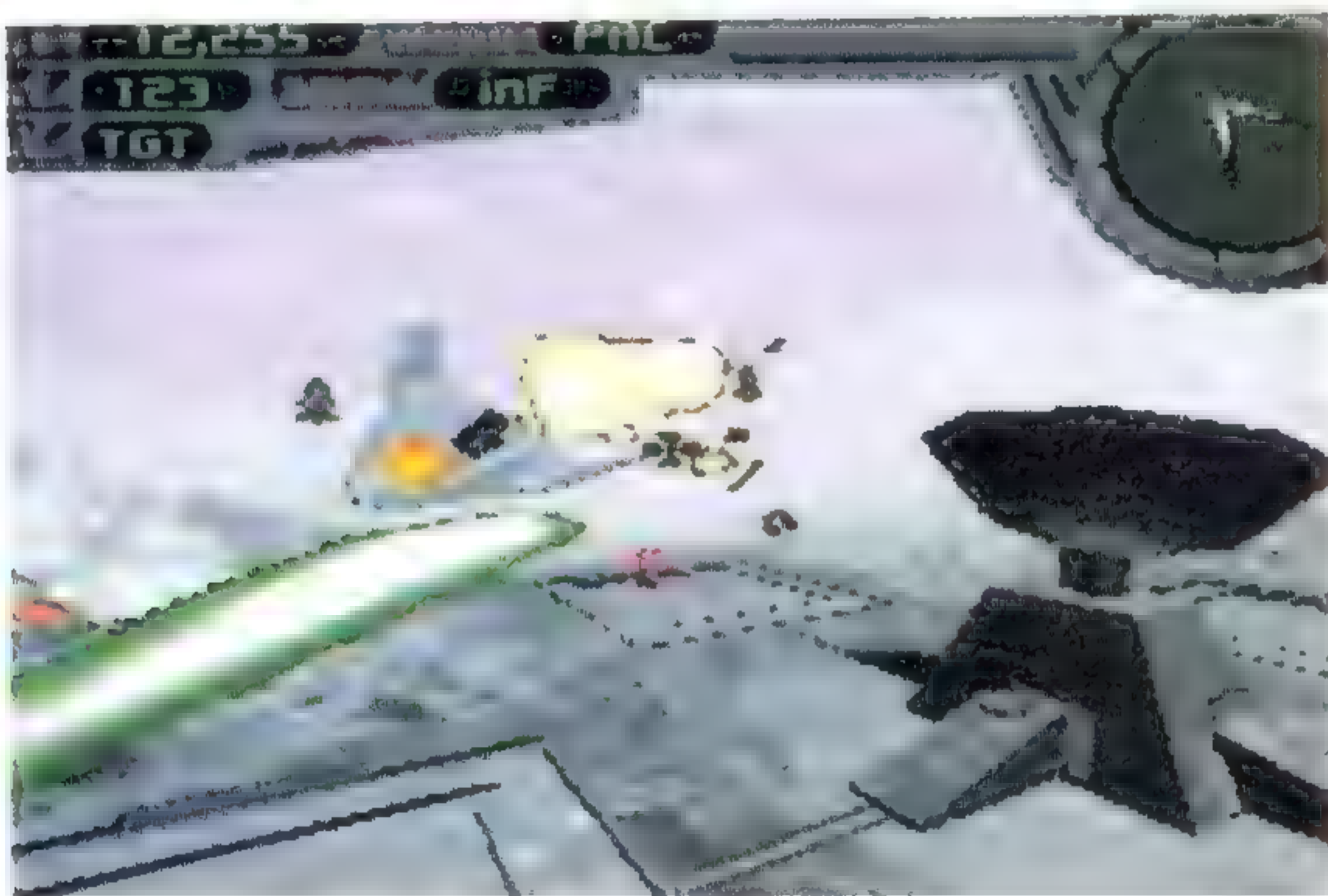
of an elite UN task force, players have to take out a militant cult with a slew of nasty weaponry, including heat-seekers, bazookas and even the power of God. The CD version of the game comes with 40 Comm-Bat™ multiplayer levels, plus a randomizer utility to automatically create new ones.

One of *ROTT*'s best features is the RemoteRidicule™ system—in addition to silent macros, players can exchange audible, verbal taunts by sending a sound file to their opponent. Typing in "Gotcha!" or "Ha ha ha ha!" isn't nearly as satisfying as *hearing* it through your sound card. Unfortunately, *ROTT* is reportedly optimized for 9600 baud, but our tests at a whopping 115,200 baud (yes, it's possible, with some modems) crashed only once, after a solid hour of glitch-free play.

DOOM has the shotgun; *ROTT* has the MP-40, a machine gun with unlimited ammo. It won't take out enemies with a single well-placed shot like most of the missile weapons will, but it won't backfire in your face and cause your own demise like some of the other guns, either. Flamewalls and firebombs are a lot of fun to watch, but drunk missiles prove to be the ultimate weapon as they follow your opponent around corners even at long distances.

Ease of connection: Pretty Good
DWANGO support: No
Minimum modem speed: 9600
Maximum modem speed: 115200
Current FLUX Champion: Dan

TERMINAL VELOCITY (3D Realms)



No, Charlie Sheen does *not* appear in this game. Programmed by the guy who did *Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0*, *Terminal Velocity* is one of the most thrilling flying blasters available—dogfights in futuristic aircraft over a scrolling, sprawling texture-mapped world that enables you to fly anywhere you want, in any direction. Just flying around (above *and* below the cloud cover) is cool enough, but the standard game pits the player against ground turrets, frisky enemy craft, strategic targets and tunnels of terror. Think of it as *Descent* without walls and *Wing Commander* without the difficulty. Multiplayer games remove all the bad guys; it's just a one-on-one aerial show-

down to the death.

Of course, that might not be the best thing—as in *NASCAR*, it's easy to get separated amidst the towering mountains or simply hide from an unsuspecting opponent above the clouds. The game's radar system, however, proves excellent for locating your prey, and after just a few rounds, it's easy to keep track of where the other player is (and when he's about to deliver death from above). The shareware version allows modem and four-player network games, but the registered and CD versions offer more levels and goodies.

As in *ROTT*, *TV* supports the RemoteRidicule™ system of audible taunts (all new ones here, including a deliciously evil "Bow down before me!") as well as the standard messaging and macros. The keys to winning the multiplayer *TV* are simple: creative sharp turns for evasive maneuvers, afterburners for quick getaways and surprise attacks, and big guns like the RTL for sheer destructive power. Powerups regenerate throughout the game, so it's helpful to write down the coordinates of where you found them for later reference; after a while, all those mountain passages begin to look alike and it's easy to get lost. A player who knows exactly where the weapon powerups are located will smoke someone who doesn't every time.

Ease of connection: Excellent
DWANGO support: Yes
Minimum modem speed: 9600
Maximum modem speed: 57600
Current FLUX Champion: Jeff ("I have no excuse. I just suck."—Dan)

VIRTUAL POOL (Interplay)



Interplay's got the right idea about multiplayer gaming, and other companies should learn from it. Between *Descent* and *Virtual Pool*, it's obvious that Interplay understands the value of head-to-head gaming—and their philosophy that every game should be modem compatible is dead on. With *Virtual Pool*, the revolutionary 3D billiards game for the PC (and one that guarantees to improve your real game or your money back!), the folks at Interplay have proven that you need not blow your opponent to bits in order to enjoy two-player competition.

As a PC billiards game, *Virtual Pool* is

pure class. The graphics are excellent (or at least as good as can be expected for a bunch of colored balls on a felt table), the physics downright scary (yes, these balls move *exactly* the way they do in real life) and the overall realism factor top-notch. But of course, you really have to be a pool fanatic in order to fully appreciate this disc; otherwise, it might seem a bit boring to the average gamer.

As a multiplayer game, *Virtual Pool* is quite good, despite a few drawbacks. The main problem is that your opponent will probably take more time to line up his shot and shoot than the computer, which means you'll spend a lot of time watching this disembodied pool cue wandering around the table looking for the perfect shot. There's quite a bit of thinking and strategy involved in *Virtual Pool*, and that certainly makes for good two-player action. But of course, the same thing can be achieved against a computer opponent.

Virtual Pool is a tremendous achievement that undoubtedly sets the standard for PC billiards for years to come, and Interplay deserves absolute credit for giving it a two-player option. But unless you're a serious pool shark (and you have at least one friend that is, too), there are other games better suited for multiplayer action.

Ease of connection: Excellent
DWANGO support: No
Minimum modem speed: 9600
Maximum modem speed: 38400
Current FLUX Champion: Jeff

WHAT'S A DWANGO?

DWANGO stands for Doom Wide Area Network Gaming Organization—it's a network of BBSes across the country who offer their computers as servers for four-player games of *DOOM*, *DOOM II*, *Heretic* and *Terminal Velocity* over the modem. Basically, you dial DWANGO (it might be a long-distance call; there are over 20 servers around the country, with the original and most lively in Houston), subscribe to the service for a \$20 setup fee plus \$20 for every 10 hours, and log in. Then, chat with the others online and play any of the above games with up to three complete strangers for as long as you like. It's great for folks who don't happen to have a local-area network in their house but want to feel the unique paranoia that comes with a four-player game of *DOOM*. Check out the file DWANGO.TXT in your game's directory for more info.





GUT WRENCH

IF THIS MAKES YOUR



KNUCKLES WHITE

IF THIS MAKES YOUR



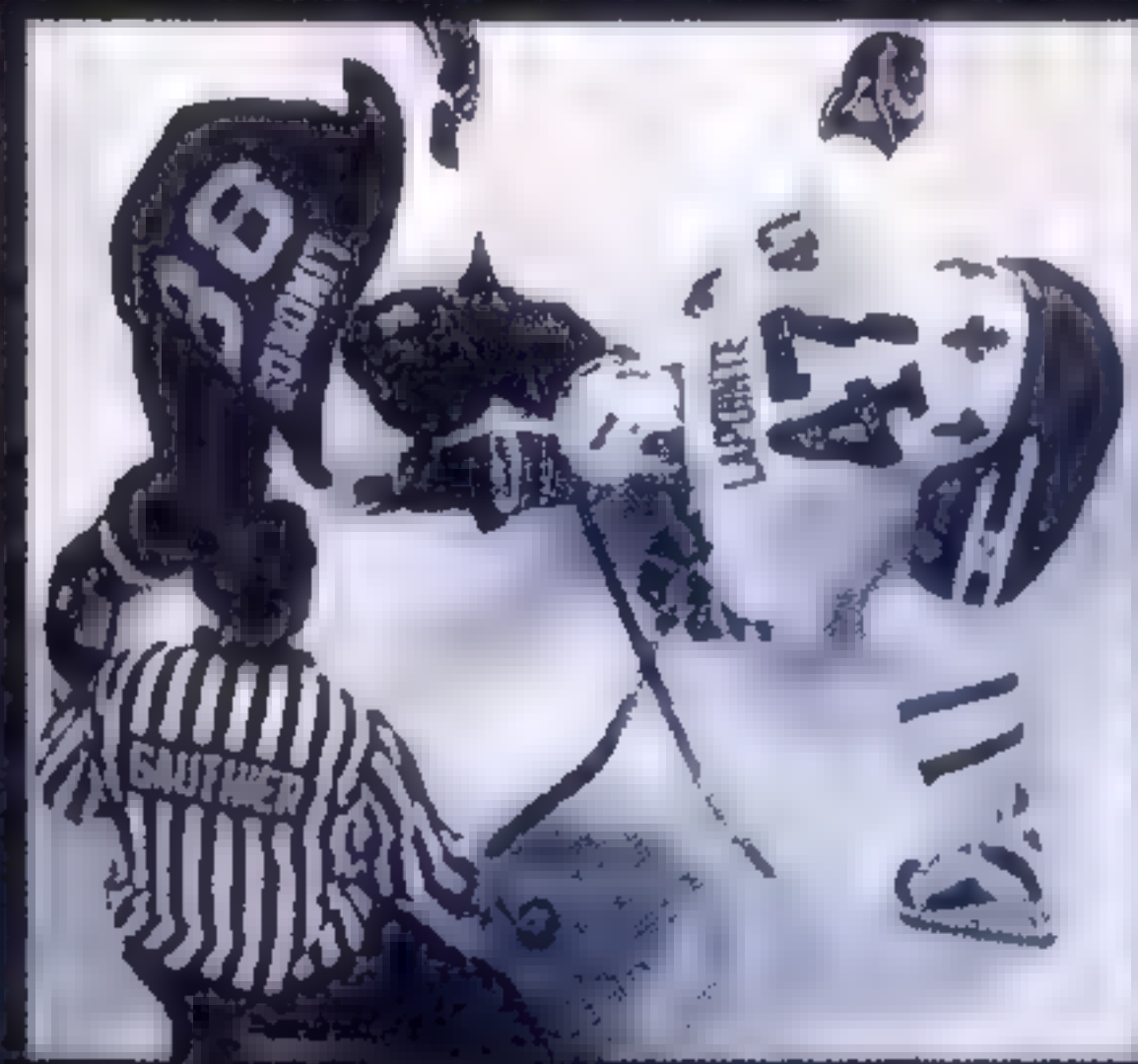
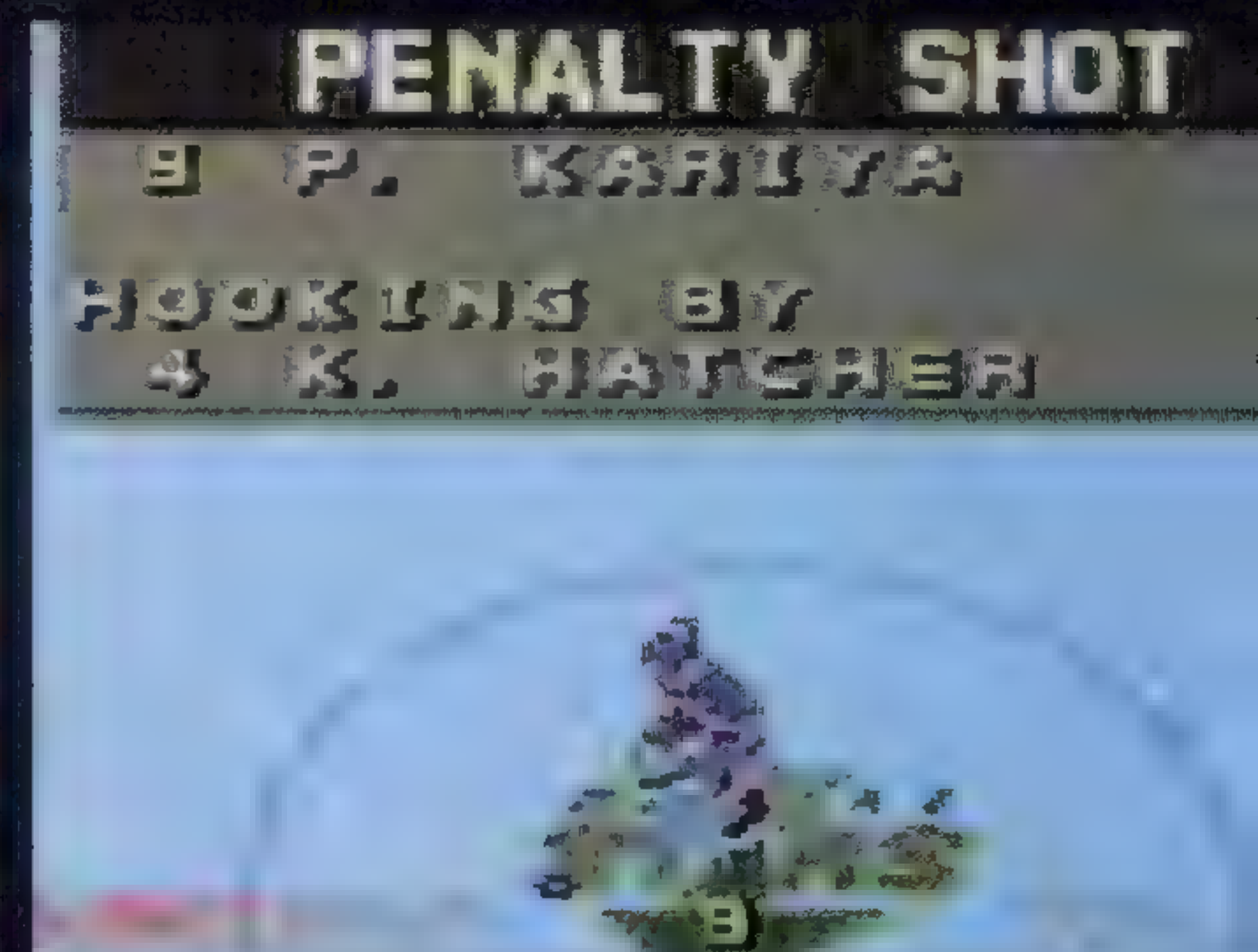
PULSE RACE

IF THIS MAKES YOUR



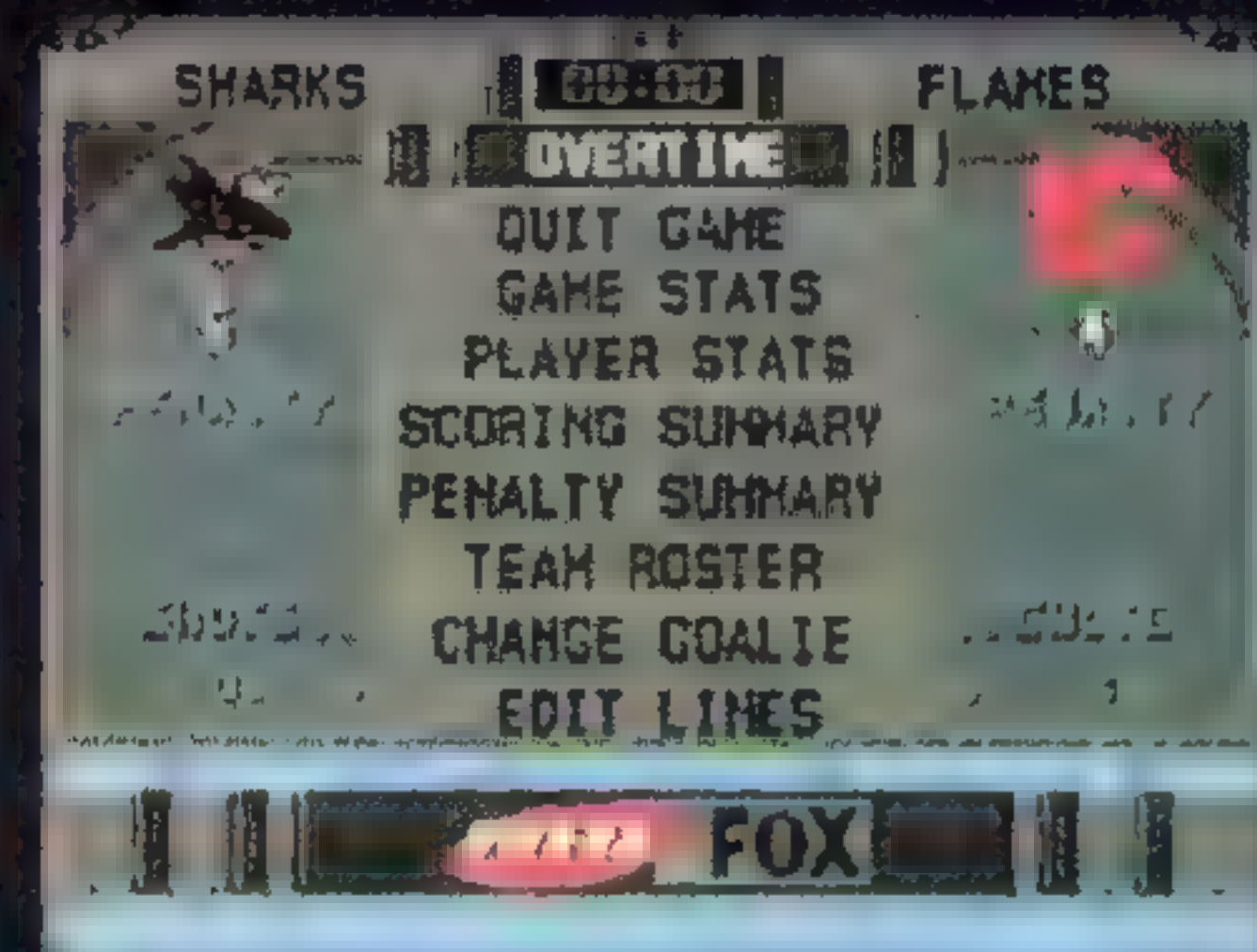
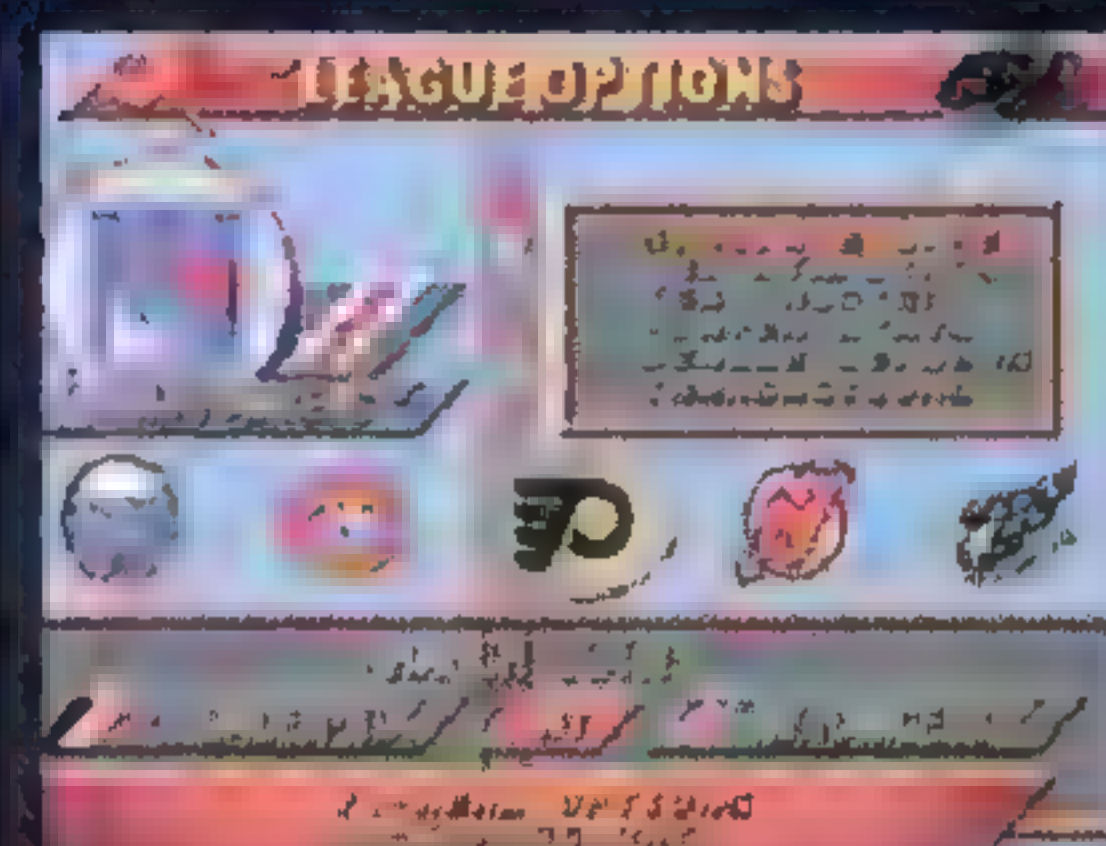
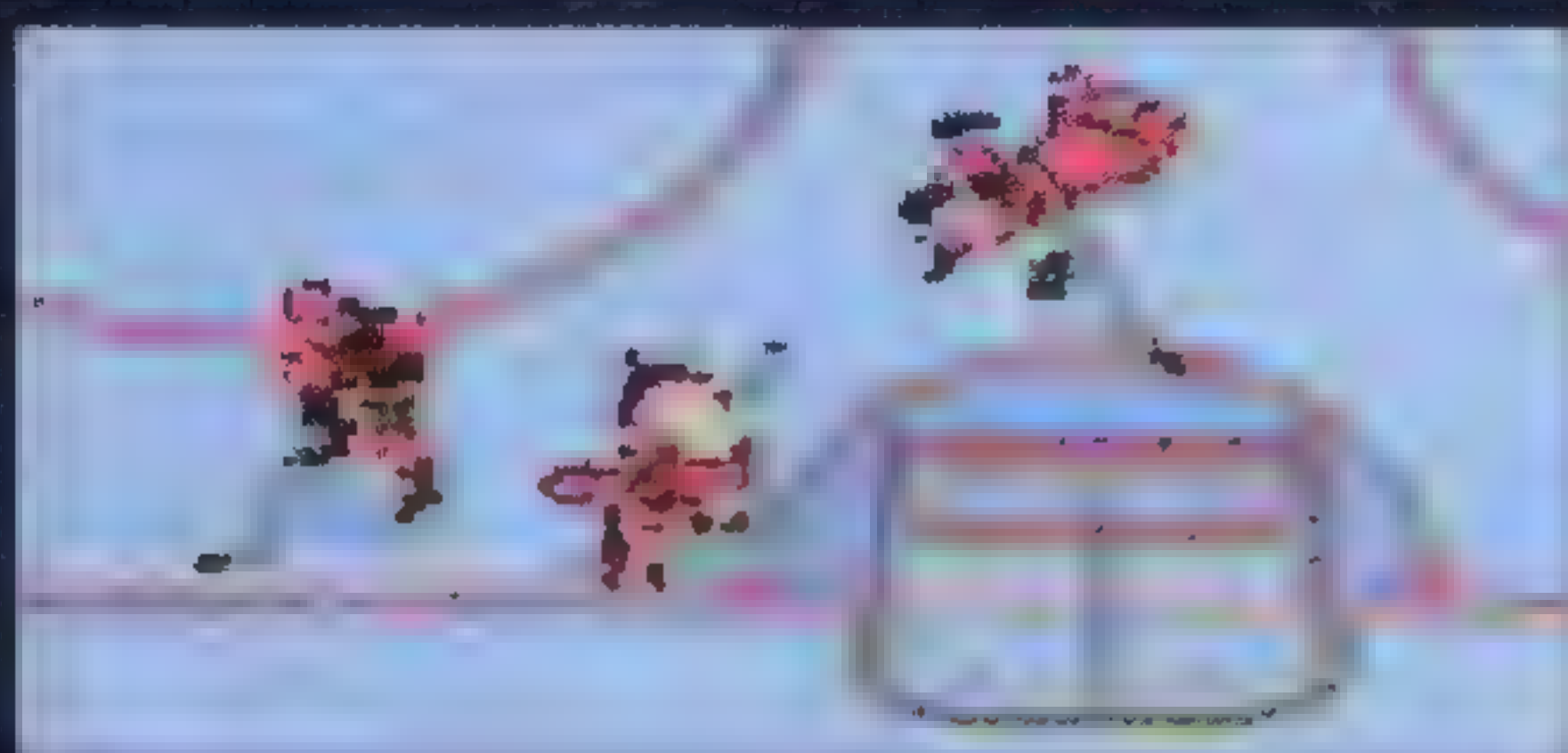
MUSCLES TENSE

IF THIS MAKES YOUR

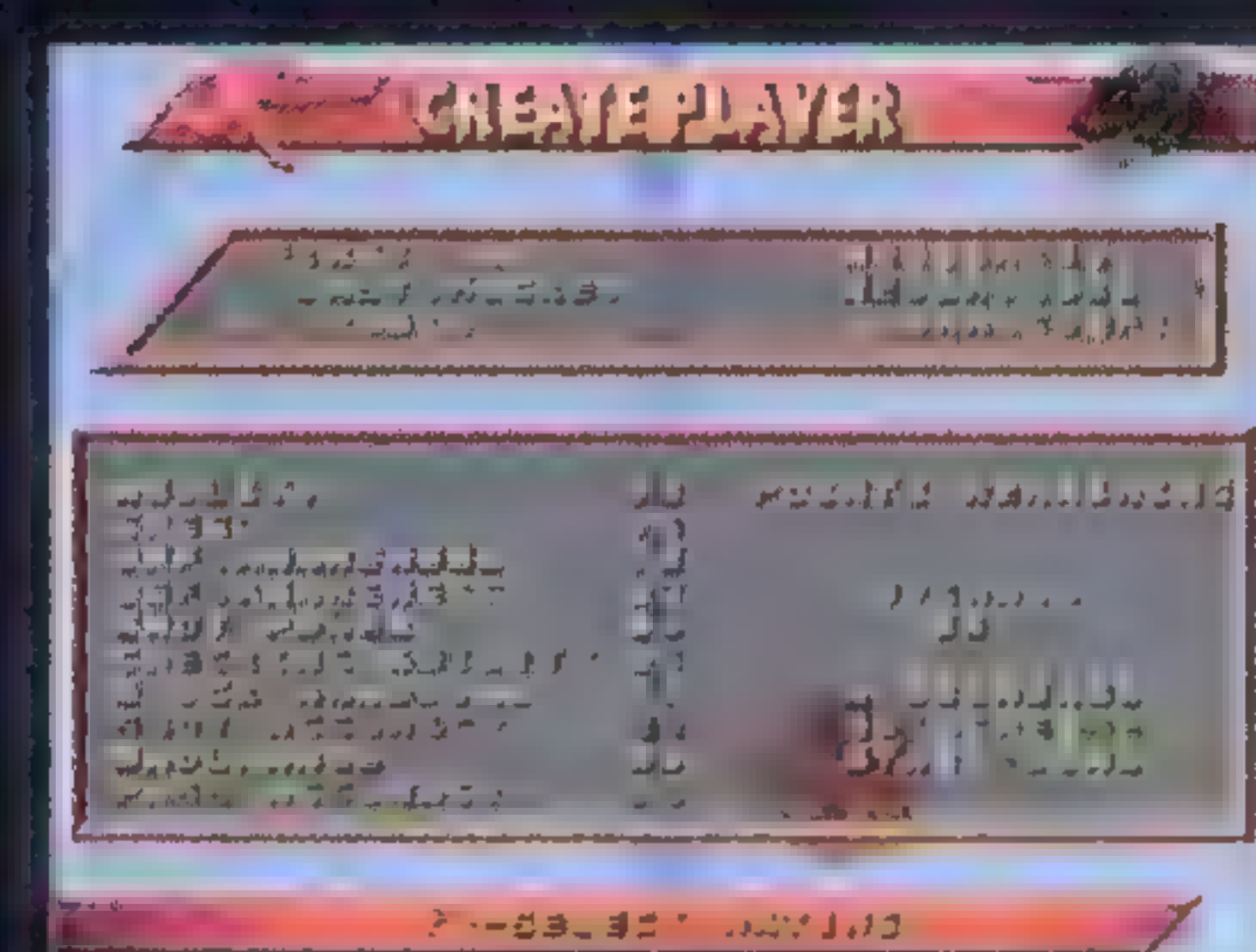
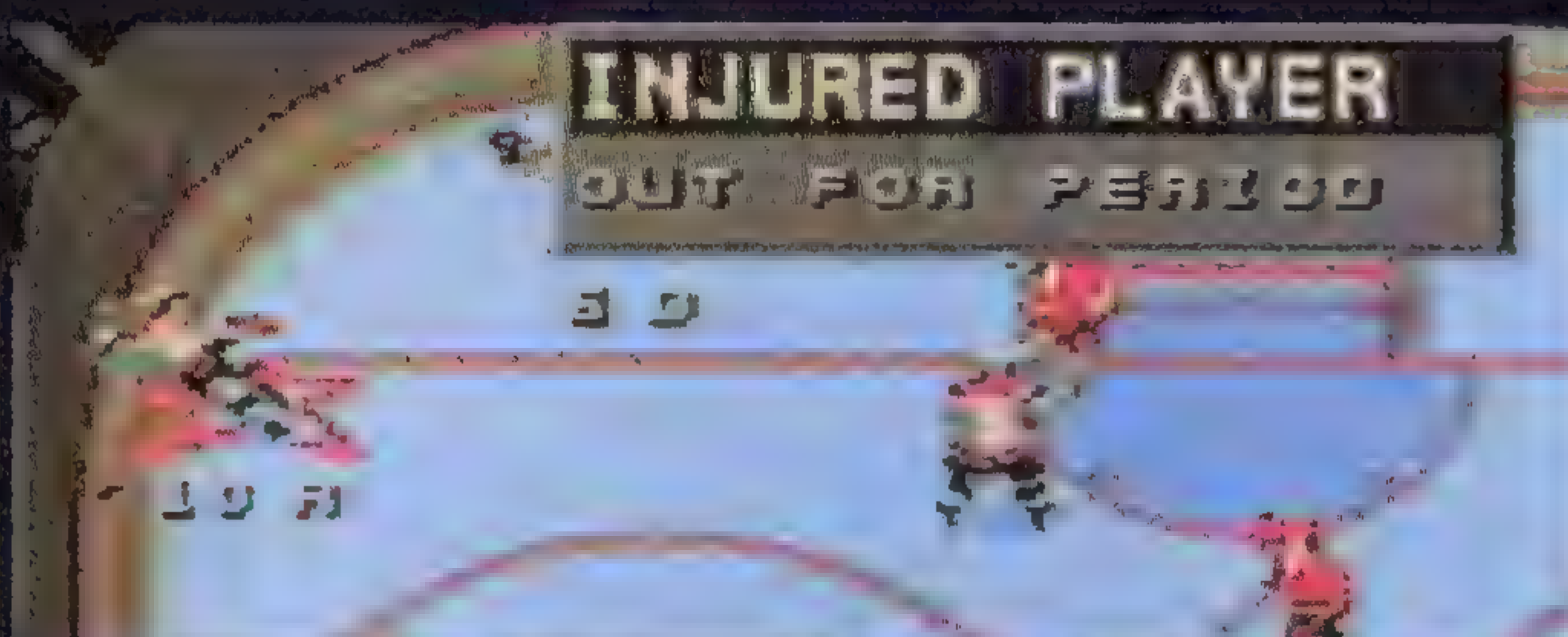


Players like Yzerman or Mogilny play where the puck's going to be, not where it's been. They have a sixth sense for it. So with a more open game around the goal, anything can happen. Be warned.

With players like Bure, Fedorov, and Fleury on the ice, blinking can be costly. So keep your eyes open. And try to keep up.



THIS WILL



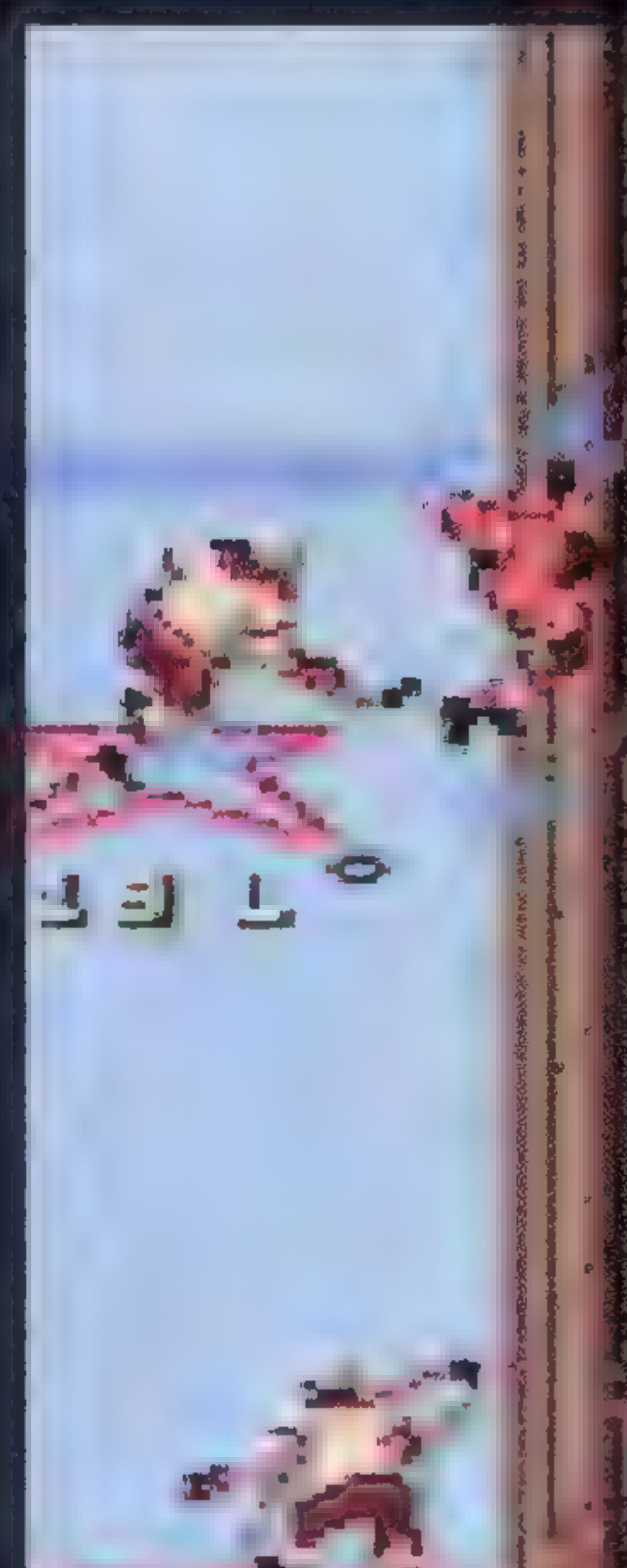
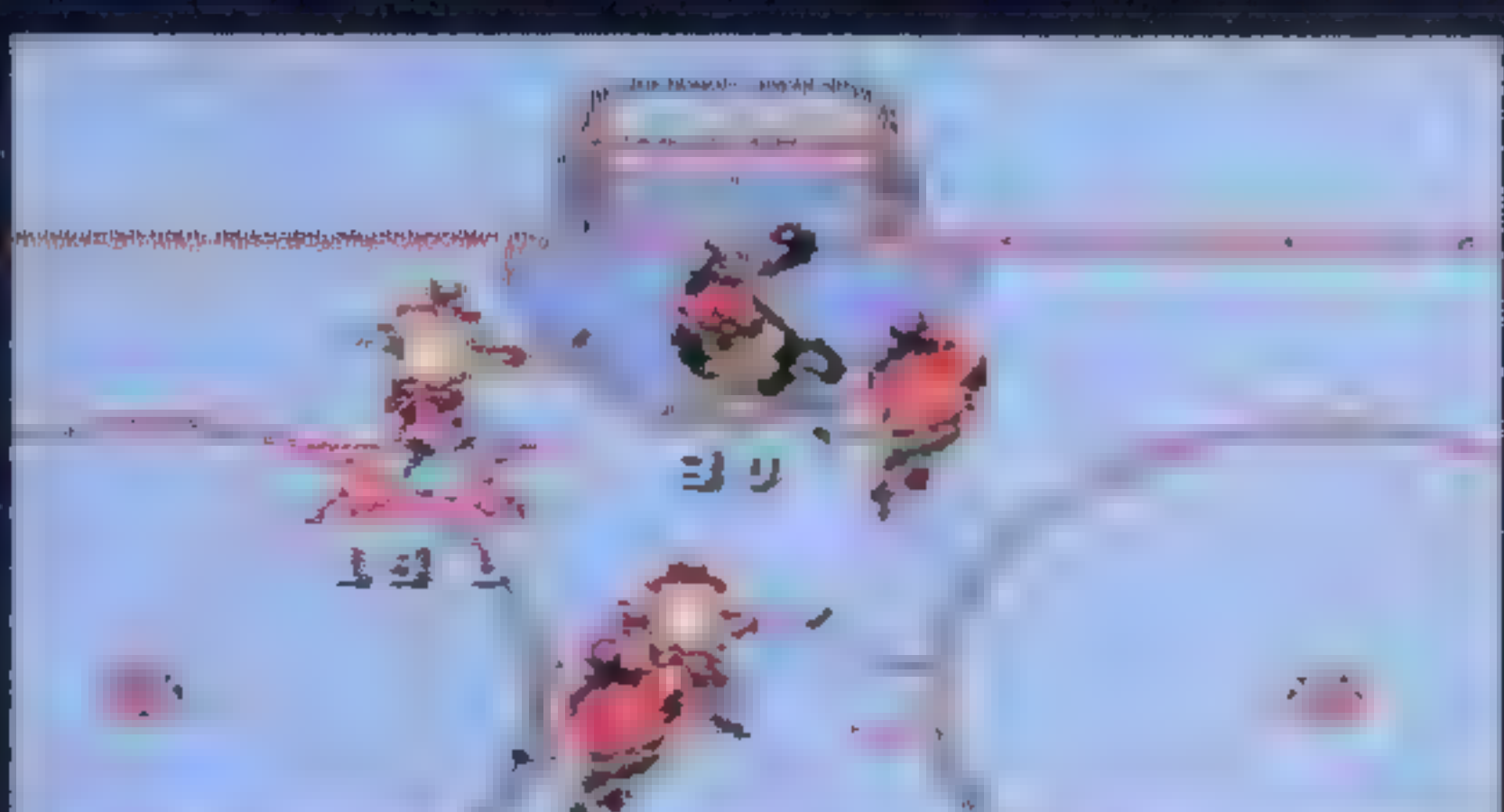
Not only do you have every NHL team and NHLPA™ player, but updated ratings show you who's hot and who needs more ice time. You also have the option to create and trade players. Kinda like being an owner, huh?



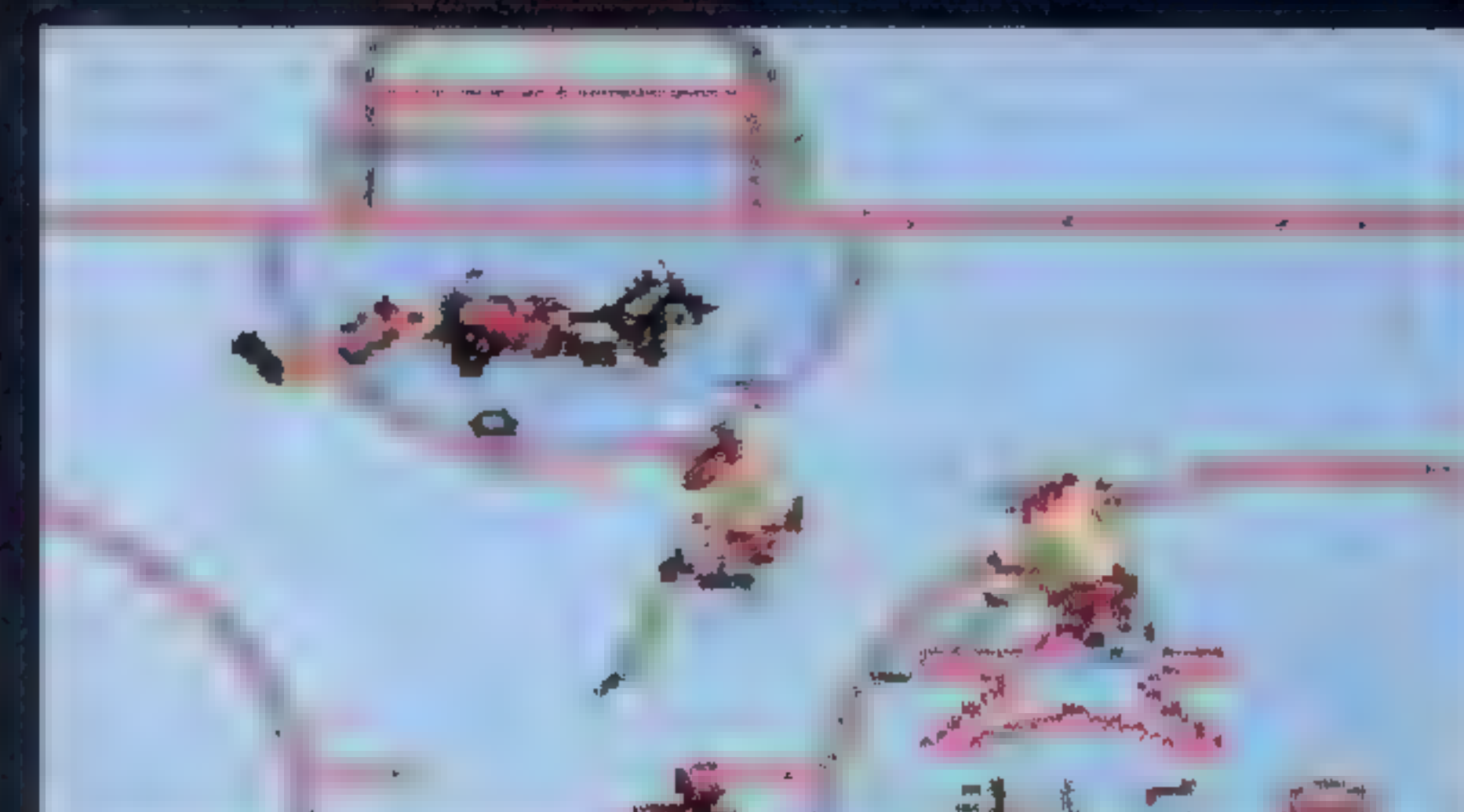
If it's in the game, it's in the game.™



You've never seen player animation like this before. Supersonic maneuvers the likes of Jagr. Brain-numbing checks the way Stevens does them. And amazing goalie moves like Brodeur's that'll make you rethink your offense.

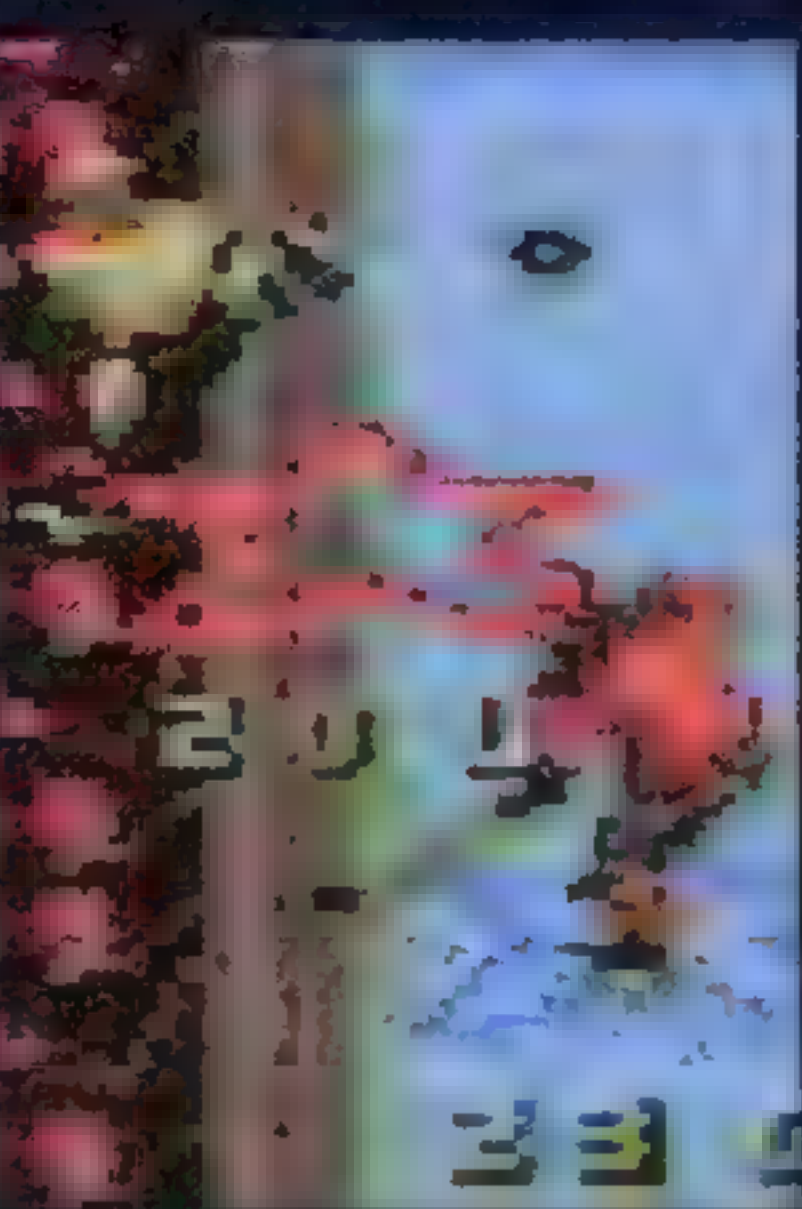
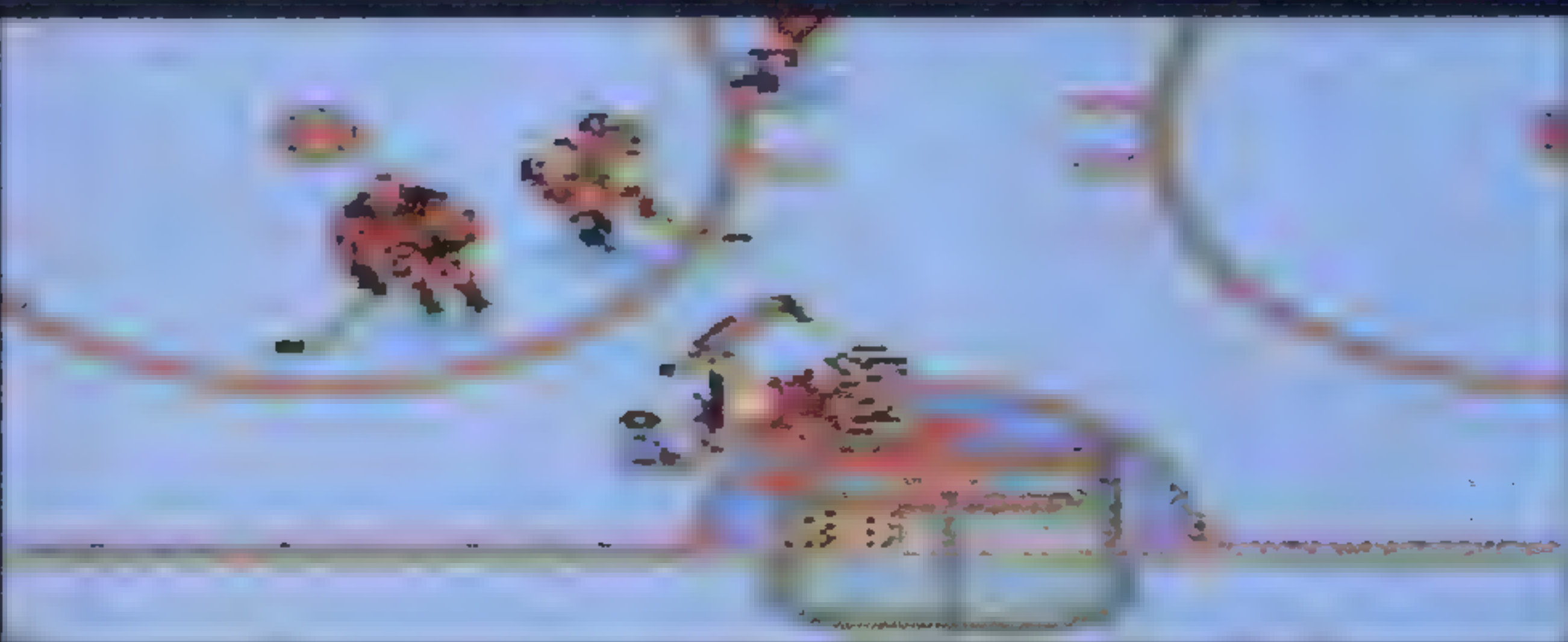


If you slack off during the 82-game season don't count on a post season. But keep up your team's intensity and you may get to kiss Lord Stanley's Cup during the on-ice presentation. No guarantees, of course.





Advanced artificial intelligence lets you play more like a team. Power play offenses. Penalty-killing defenses. Your teammates get into position for the play. But don't forget, the same goes for the other players.



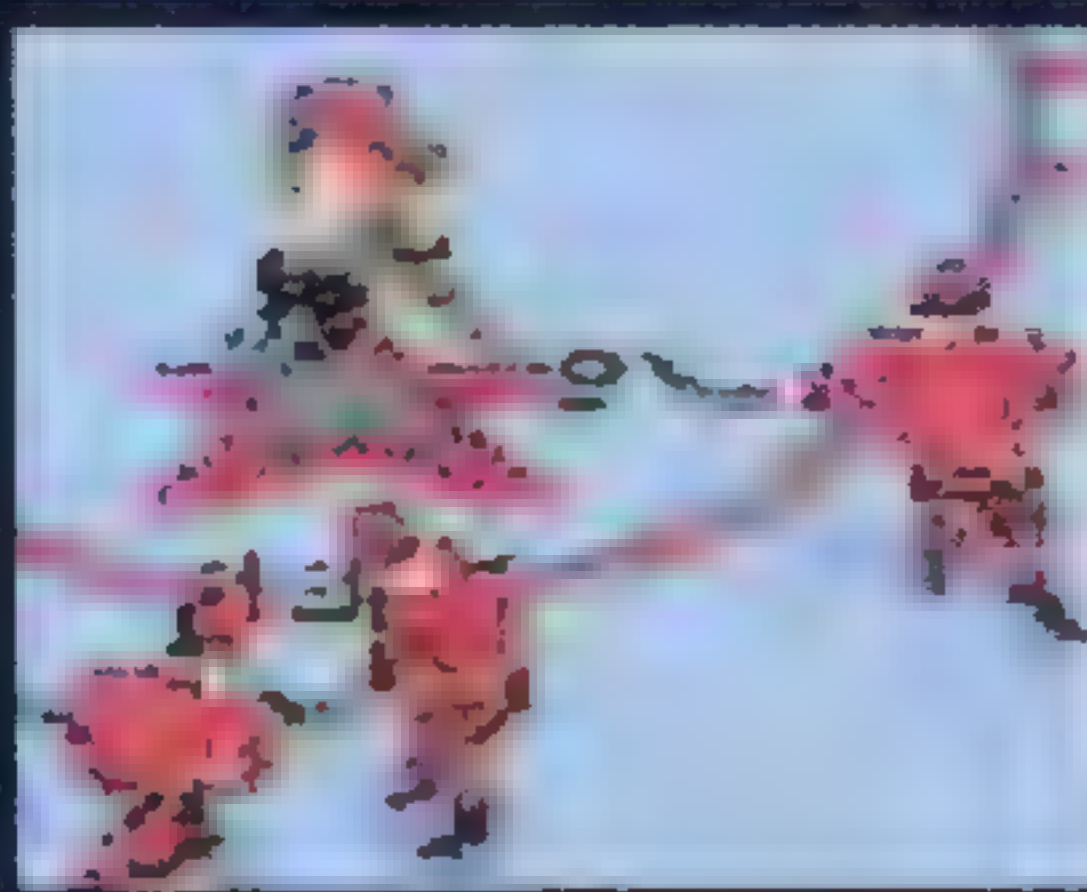
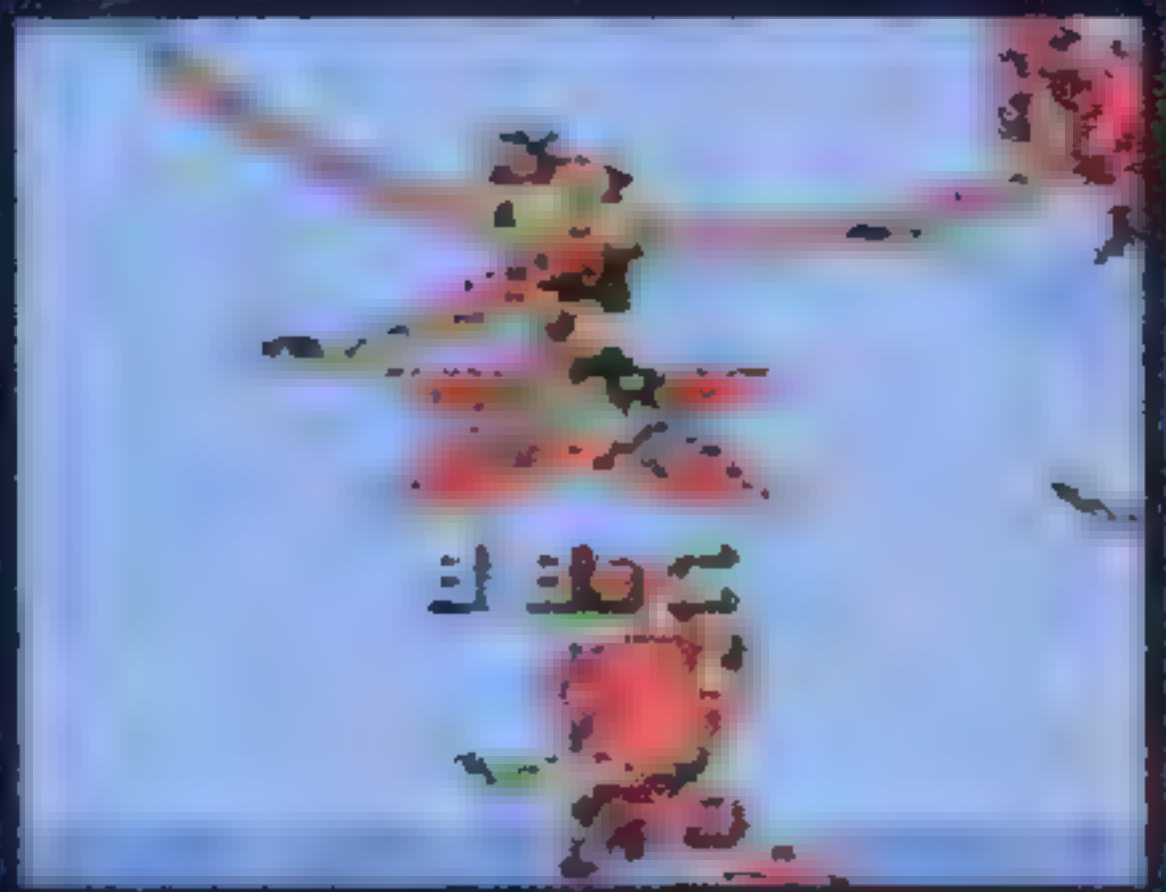
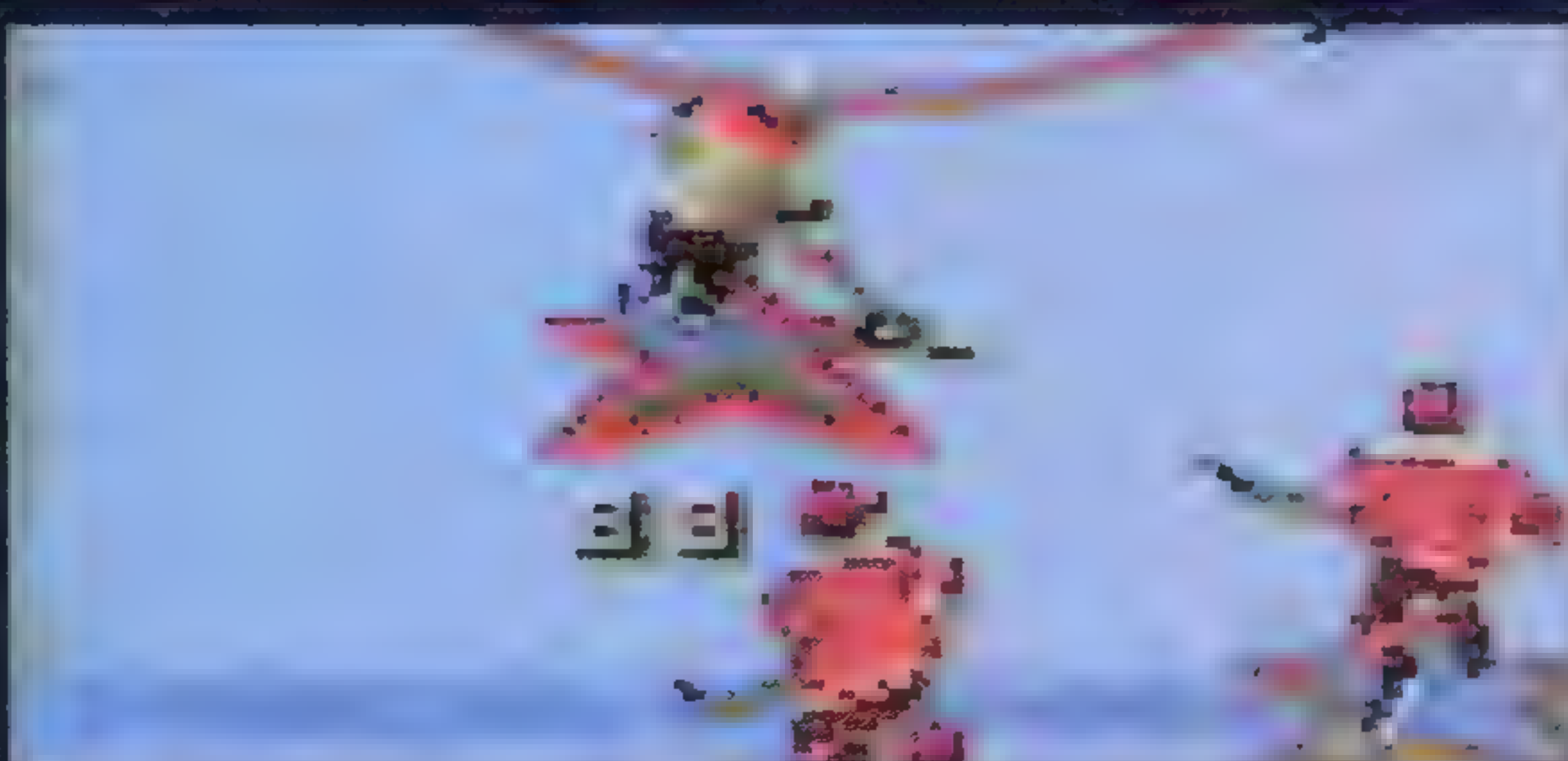
5-minute majors. 4-minute double minors. 2-minute minors. What did you expect? If you can't do the time don't do the, well, you know what we mean.



SWEAT MAKE YOUR



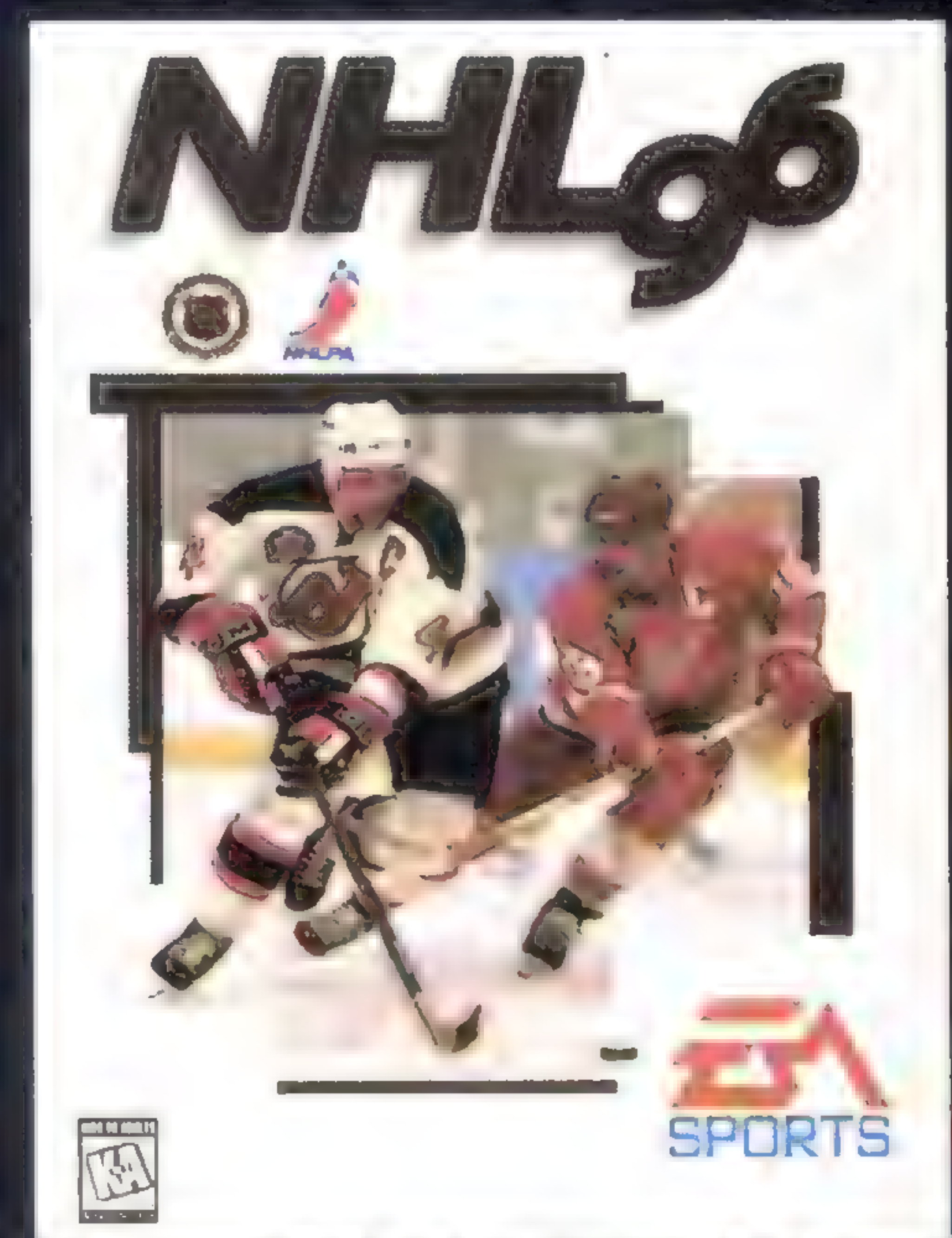
TV-style presentation of the match, stats, rankings and everything you need from the booth. On the ice there's crowd chanting and arena music. Get psyched. This is the NHL.



The puck drops October 6 on Sega Genesis, Super NES, Game Gear and Game Boy.



More blistering moves and blurring ways to score. One-time passing. The give and go. And a new move you better tighten your skates for. The Spin-O-Rama.



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SPECIAL PRIMAL RAGE FEATURE!

BLOODBATH

by jeff kitts

Whether you own a LOWLY GaME BOY or super-duper Pentium computer—or any video game system in between—**Primal Rage is coming home.** Senior Producer Ken Humphries talks to FLUX about the 11 home conversions of the Jurassic Park of arcade fighters

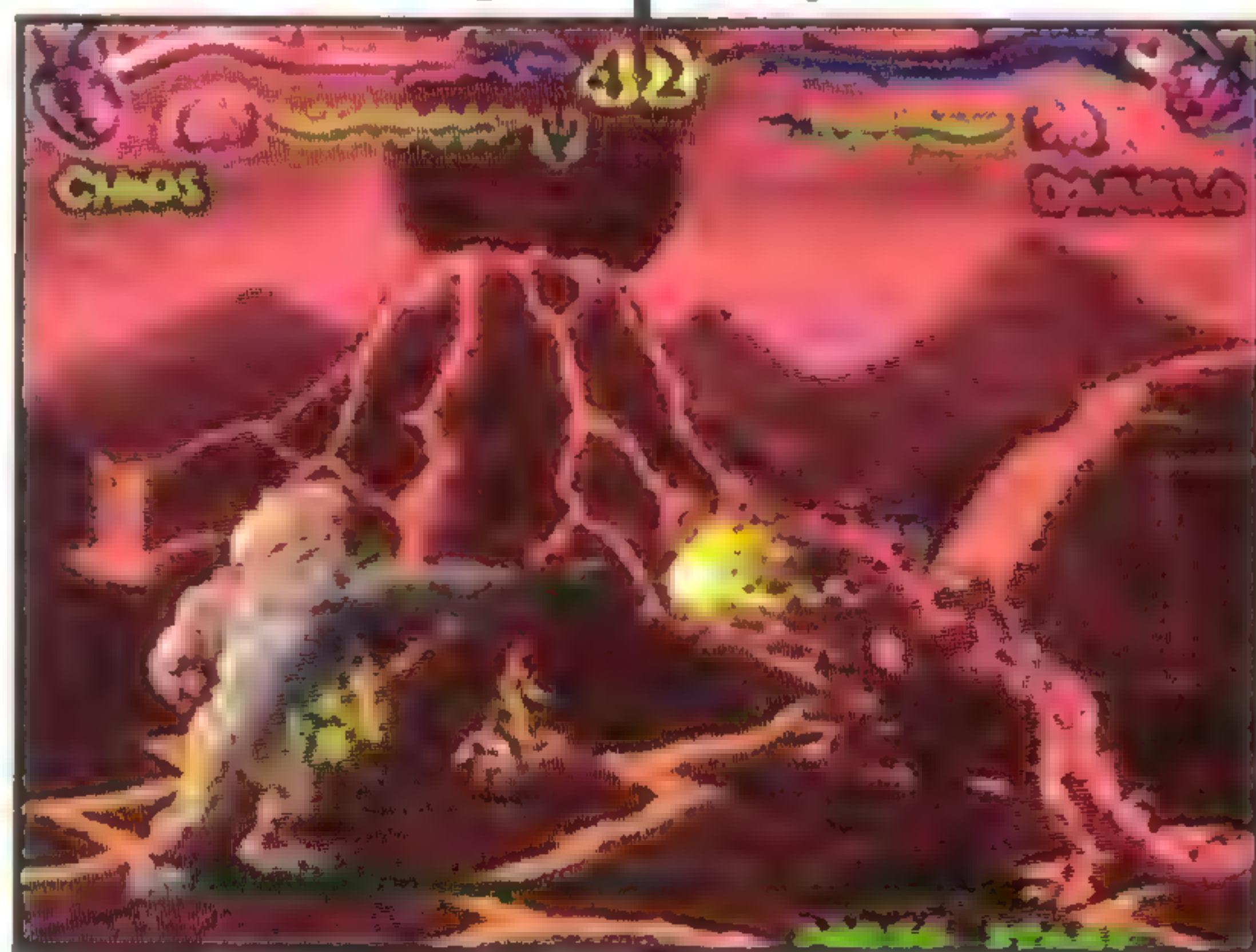
By the time the year is over, there won't be a video game machine on the market that doesn't have a home translation of the hit arcade game, *Primal Rage*. Time Warner Interactive is currently in the midst of bringing its prehistoric dinosaur blood-fest to 11 different home gaming platforms: SNES, Genesis, Game Boy, Game Gear, 32X, Saturn, PlayStation, 3DO, Jaguar CD and PC and Macintosh computers. And while each version offers the same rip-claw, smash-mouth dino-bashing that made *Primal Rage* an instant arcade favorite, there will be significant differences between the various versions. In an effort to get a first-hand look at what goes into taking one arcade game and translating it to 11 different home platforms, FLUX contacted *Primal Rage* Senior Producer Ken Humphries (who previously worked on such TWI games as *Rise Of The Robots* for the PC and *Red Zone* for the Genesis) to give us the low-down on this T-Rex sized undertaking.

Primal Rage? How will they differ from each other?

KEN HUMPHRIES: When we do home conversions of a game like *Primal Rage* onto all these different platforms, we break them down into three groups: Jaguar CD/3DO, Saturn/PlayStation, and PC/Mac. The Jaguar CD and 3DO are very similar in many respects, so we've taken them on as the

same thing. A lot of the features and applications of both versions will be very similar. Those versions will feature dinosaurs that are bigger than the Genesis version, but still not quite full size. We're shooting for about 70 to 75% of the original size of the dinosaurs in the arcade game. With the Saturn and PlayStation versions, we're shooting for full size dinosaurs or maybe 90% of the original size, and we're using the

actual original sound patches from the arcade version to try and make the sound as close to the arcade game as possible. The other platforms will just be an approximation of the original sound. There will also be additional features in



FLUX: What can you tell us about the many forthcoming versions of







a tug of war. Also, when you finish the game, you'll get a statistical tracking of how well you did, how many combos you made, how many fatalities you performed, how well your hit percentage is, etc.

FLUX: How about the 32X version?

HUMPHRIES: The 32X version is kind of special. The original idea was to put the game into a CD format for the 32X and make it like the Jaguar CD and 3DO versions. But since then we've re-evaluated that and have decided to make it a cartridge game—most likely a 32-meg cart. It will be a more souped-up version of the Genesis game. It'll have bigger dinosaurs with 15

the Saturn and PlayStation versions that you didn't see in the Genesis or SNES versions, like different types of two player games. One's called "Endurance" and one's called "Tug Of War." In "Endurance," each player picks four dinosaurs to fight with, and then it's basically a single-round elimination game—the first person to run out of dinosaurs loses. In "Tug Of War," we replaced the heart bar at the top with a bar gauge, and as you do damage, you pull the bar toward your side. The objective is to win by tugging the bar all the way across, like

color backgrounds instead of 15 color backgrounds. We might be able to get the shadowing effect back—things like that.

FLUX: Seeing as you're programming the same game for 11 different platforms, how do you view the differences between competitive systems, like the 3DO versus the Jaguar, or the Saturn versus the PlayStation?

HUMPHRIES: I can really give you a fair assessment of the 3DO and Jaguar CD because we're working on those right now. These systems don't have as much

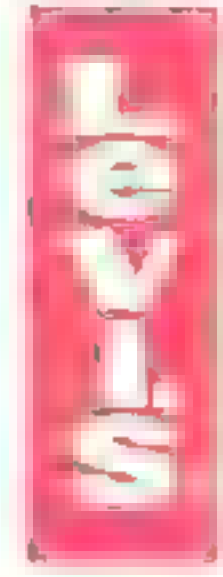


power as some of the other high-end systems, so right now we're trying to optimize them in order to get the speed up. The art and graphics are pretty much transportable between the two because we're using very similar tools. So the graphics are pretty much straightforward for both platforms. The game is also fairly well transportable between the Saturn and PlayStation, and we're able to do the same things on both systems.

FLUX: Seeing as the Jaguar is the only 64-bit system on the market, how does it compare to the other, 32-bit systems?

HUMPHRIES: Well, if you look at the way Atari counted their 64 bits, and did it the same way on the Saturn, then the Saturn would be a 128-bit machine. So I don't know if you can really say that the Jaguar is a true 64-bit system. But to answer your question more specifically, I think each system has things that it does well, and things that it doesn't do well. So once we get the game code converted over, then we start adjusting to specifics. For example, the 3DO does transparencies very well, so have these



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YOU ONLY HAVE TO WASH THEM SOMETIMES.



very nice, neat, transparent, shadowed backgrounds, which is different from any of the other backgrounds on the other systems—because the 3DO lends itself very well to that. And something that the Jaguar might not do as well, like decompression, then we have to figure out other ways to compensate for the fact that it doesn't do compression very well. So you play to a system's strengths and attack its weaknesses.

FLUX: Of all 11 different versions, which would you say is the definitive versions of *Primal Rage*?

HUMPHRIES: Well, all the versions aren't done yet, but at this point, the PC version looks very nice, especially on a faster system. It could be the most artful rendition of the original arcade game, mainly because, unlike the other systems, the last thing we have to worry about with the PC version is memory. On the other hand, the graphics processor isn't nearly as fast as some of the other systems, so that kind of puts us in a bit of a quandary. So I can't really say if it's the best, but it will be the closest to the arcade—it'll have full-sized dinosaurs, and we might not be able to do that on any other system.

FLUX: Did any of the volleyball and bowling Easter Egg games in the arcade version of *Primal Rage* make it to the home versions?

HUMPHRIES: Some stuff made it to the SNES and Genesis versions, but not much. We ran into a real space problem because we wanted to make the home versions as fluid and have as much of the feel of the arcade version as possible, and because of the space limitations we had to sacrifice some stuff. There are some secret codes in the Genesis and SNES versions, and we do have plans to keep all the original cheat codes and other things in the higher-end versions of the game.

FLUX: Are there plans for an Ultra 64 version of *Primal Rage*?

HUMPHRIES: At this point, no.

FLUX: What can you tell us about how the dinosaurs in the game were created using models?

HUMPHRIES: The main artist, Jason Leong, got together with Dennis Harper, the producer/programmer of *Primal Rage*, and they came up with drawings of the characters—ideas of the basic moves the dinosaurs would have. Once they had the drawings done, they sent them to a design house in Southern California that designs models. They've done models for *The Terminator* and other movies. So they made highly intricate models of each dinosaur—each cost around \$20,000. When the models were done, they

brought them to our video lab, to the stop-motion animation studio. They used hand drawings of each move, and the animators would have to replicate each move on the actual models—then they'd take a picture of the model in that position. It's a very long and laborious process, and when they were done they picked out the photos they liked best and

put them into a graphical format that they could use in the coin-op.

FLUX: Why go with the old-fashioned stop-motion animation technique, when computer rendering has become the common standard nowadays?

HUMPHRIES: Well, you could say that the technique is old fashioned, but the truth is that *The Terminator* and *T2* were both done using stop-motion. I think the decision to use that process was basically that the guys programming the game were inspired by that method of animation. And I think they felt that it gave the characters a more realistic look. Very technical creatures you can do very nicely with a computer-rendering machine like an SGI or Wavefront, but when you do organic characters, it's very difficult to replicate in computer format what you can do with models. There are some subtleties in movement and form that you'd have real problems doing on a computer, and in those cases it's better to use models. It is more expensive and more laborious process, but they think it comes up with a much better look for organic creatures.

FLUX: Did the fatalities make it into the home versions?

HUMPHRIES: Well...the arcade game had 900 frames of animation per dinosaur, but we can never go with that size for the home versions because there's just not enough space. So we're going for a little less than half of that and trying to keep the characters as big as possible. And we're doing certain things to help us, like removing the fatalities from that mix—which means you'll have to load a fatality off the CD when you do one, which means there will be a slight pause. But we did that specifically so that you'd have more frames of animation during the actual battles.

FLUX: Are there plans for a sequel to *Primal Rage*?

HUMPHRIES: Yes, there are.

FLUX: What's your take on the current status of fighting games? Do you think the genre is in danger of burning itself

out, or will it always be there?

HUMPHRIES: There are certain genres of games that have always done well, and I think the fighting genre is one of them. As far as whether or not it will lose some of the dominance that it's had over the last few years, I really couldn't tell you. I think with games like *Virtua Fighter* and *Toshinden*, you'll see the fighting genre move into a more 3D, more realistic direction. But I do think there are a lot of companies out there making fighting games that shouldn't be. [laughs]

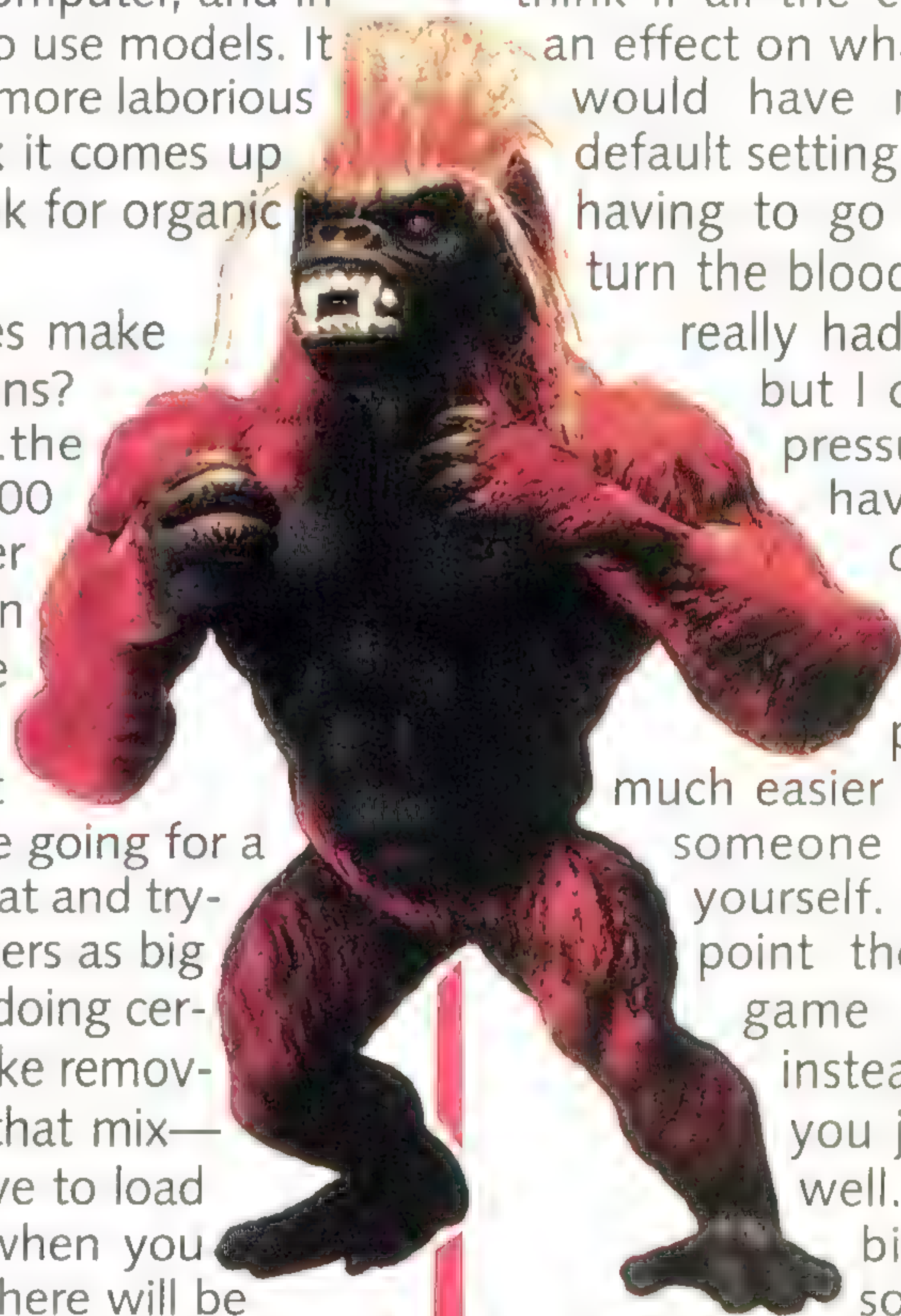
FLUX: What would you say is *Primal Rage*'s greatest strength as a fighting game?

HUMPHRIES: It's greatest strength would probably be the number of moves—it's a very complex game. Once you become a really good fighter, you can really catch into the combination and multiple-hit system. The better you get at the game, the more subtle some of the moves become. If you're really good you can get a 15-hit combo, and it's incredible. You have to have perfect timing.

FLUX: Time Warner has been taking a lot of heat lately for violence in rap music and movies—how does something like that effect a violent, bloody game like *Primal Rage*? Is that why there's a "gore" switch in the game to turn blood on and off?

HUMPHRIES: The gore switch was actually in the original arcade game, and I thought it would be a nice thing to maintain in the home versions. But I think if all the controversy really had an effect on what we were doing, we would have made Gore Off the default setting, instead of the player having to go in and change it to turn the blood off. I don't think it's really had an effect on us yet, but I do worry about if the pressure keeps up, will it have some kind of effect on us in the future.

The way I see it, it's all just a lot of finger pointing. And it's much easier to point the finger at someone else instead of at yourself. It's much easier to point the finger at a video game a kid just played instead of at the fact that you just didn't raise them well. And I think that's the biggest problem in society today—not the fact that video games are violent. Video games have always been violent, but today they just look more realistic. And really, how realistic is something like *Mortal Kombat II*, where I can rip out another guy's spinal column? I mean, things like that just don't happen in real life. It's comical violence—Bugs Bunny violence.



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IDENTITY CRISIS

Will Sony's 32-bit PlayStation set the new gaming standard—or be eclipsed by Saturn and out-hyped by Ultra 64? Sony's Product Marketing Director Haven Carter Dubrul attempts to set the record straight.

By Dan Amrich

Sega struck first. Nintendo will hit last. And somewhere in the middle, there's Sony.

As the video game wars heat up for the big holiday shopping season, that's the problem Sony's 32-bit PlayStation faces—it's not the first next-generation system, it's not the last and it's not from a company known for video games. What the PlayStation—known within the gaming industry as the PSX—does have in its favor is a smart, clean hardware architecture, a successful Japanese following, killer apps like the 3D fighter *Battle Arena Toshinden*, enthusiastic support of 400 third-party developers, an exclusive agreement with Williams to have *Mortal Kombat 3* make its 32-bit debut on the PlayStation and, of course, the entertainment and electronics juggernaut that is Sony. When you look at it that way, maybe the PlayStation isn't the underdog after all.

But this isn't the first time Sony has released an electronic plaything with bitchin' hardware under the hood—the well-designed, ill-fated Betamax VCR comes to mind—and they seem well aware that the PlayStation, despite being a superior system, could take a similar nosedive.

Clearly, cool specs alone won't win gamers over; if numbers were all that mattered, we'd all be playing with calculators.

The PlayStation is kickin' major ass on the Japanese market, going toe-to-toe with Sega's machine and, depending on who you talk to, out-selling Saturn in some cases. Still, some maintain that Sony's arriving too late to a war that's already got too many enemies. Others say that Sega and Nintendo have just too much power to be toppled by an upstart, even one as seasoned and savvy as Sony. Still others like to point out that the corporation's current

contribution to home gaming—16-bit clunkers like *ESPN Speedworld* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*—simply suck.

With so much unproven on American soil and so much money hanging in the balance—not to mention the adoration or scorn of notoriously demanding U.S. gamers—can the PlayStation prove its worth? Haven Carter Dubrul, Sony Computer Entertainment of America's Product Marketing Director, thinks gamers across the States will be in sheer PSXtacy this fall.

FLUX: You've seen Sega's Saturn; how does the PlayStation compare?

DUBRUL: [pause] Good question. Well, I think that the PlayStation will be the winner this Christmas season, because I look at games like *Battle Arena Toshinden* and *Ridge Racer* and I watch kids play them. And they are telling us that they've never felt so engrossed in a game—it felt like they were really in the game, and it was the closest thing to virtual reality that they've experienced in a game.

FLUX: Are you impressed with the Saturn hardware itself?

DUBRUL: Well, the Sega Saturn is a fine machine, technically, but I think the PlayStation is a superior machine. We have developers clamoring to develop for the PlayStation and they're telling us that they want to develop games exclusively on our platform—we have over 150 developers lined up in the U.S. and over 400 worldwide. We have publishers planning to release over 50 games this Christmas and there are 150 games currently in development. So that tells me that we have a superior machine to any product that's available.

FLUX: Did the two companies work in a vacuum, developing each sys-



tem independently of each other? Or was Sony able to see what Sega was doing, development-wise, and then plan the PlayStation so it would one-up them?

DUBRUL: Well, Sony is a huge company, and R&D [research & development] is an ongoing endeavor. My understanding is that the Sony PlayStation was developed independent of any other technology, the result of a huge R&D effort in Japan.

FLUX: Earlier you'd said that you felt the PlayStation was going to be the winner for Christmas. The market is already flooded; what's your game plan for convincing the public that the PlayStation is the one to buy?

DUBRUL: Well, we really started things off at E3 with the trade and the press, so we've already been working from about April and May. We have some promotions that will begin to leak out this summer through music festivals, beach volleyball events—basically wherever our consumers are this summer. They'll get exposure both directly, by having the PlayStation there to try, or indirectly, via videotape. We also will have a World Wide Web homepage and an 800 number that people can call for more information. But we're going to build the campaign up until the launch, so the tease will begin in the summer and then we launch September 9th. By then, all early adopters should know about the Sony PlayStation, and then we'll go into a more vast marketing effort, where every gamer should know about the machine by Christmas. And they'll know that it's the best system based on game footage, and when they go to retail to try the product out, they'll have the best gaming experience on the thousands of interactive kiosks in certain retailers.

FLUX: Sega pulled a fast one by releasing Saturn in May instead of September, as they originally intended. How did the early launch affect Sony?

DUBRUL: Well, I don't know if they pulled a fast one—I think they made a smart move. But our plan is and has been to launch September 9th, nationally. It will be available in all retail outlets that typically carry video games on September 9th.

FLUX: Was there ever a temptation to release it earlier, or is it better for Sony to wait, rather than to go head-to-head with a powerful rival like Sega?

DUBRUL: Well, you know what the sales seasonality looks like—they all begin to peak from September through December, and software sales are still strong through January and February, and then the market bottoms out. So Sega has introduced Saturn into retail outlets in a low seasonality time frame. Our plan is to launch September 9th with 15 to 20 titles on the shelf the same day at the best price point with the best games.

FLUX: Why is there no pack-in game with the PlayStation? The last 32-bit system to





ship without a pack-in game was the 32X, and look what happened to that!

DUBRUL: Well, I can't tell you what we're going to put in the box right now, but I can tell you that we should have "plug & play" with the PlayStation—you'll be able to put something in your machine and have a game experience immediately.

FLUX: What about Nintendo's Ultra 64? Gamers are very enthusiastic—almost religious—about the system, because even though we haven't seen anything yet, people still believe it will be the pinnacle of gaming. How does Sony plan to combat the Ultra threat?

DUBRUL: I think the proof is in the pudding, and the pudding in this case is the games. Once kids get exposure to the PlayStation and see the games, they're going to say, "I have to find out more about that product," and they're going to seek it out—play it wherever they can. And I'm confident that PlayStation is going to win out.

FLUX: You've called the PlayStation consumers "kids" a couple of times now, but are \$300 and \$400 super systems like the Saturn and PSX really being marketed as toys to kids anymore?

DUBRUL: No, they're being marketed as their own category—video games. I'm an old lady, so I say kids. [laughs] So it's gamers, or users, but it's not being marketed as a toy. I don't think games have

been marketed as toys for some time.

FLUX: Does Sony plan to have a mascot, like Sonic or Mario?

DUBRUL: The PlayStation does not have a mascot, no.

FLUX: Then who was that big guy with the purple head plastered all over E3? And what's the little saying in Japanese underneath him?

DUBRUL: You'll be finding out more about him. Kids think he's cool. "Hamarido-max" is what he's saying, and that's a rating in the Japanese gaming magazines. Hamarido is the "suck-in factor." One of the things the Japanese rate games on is how much the player gets sucked into the game, how involving the experience is. Several PlayStation games, including *Toshinden*, received a 5, the maximum rating for that aspect. No games before had ever gotten a 5.

FLUX: Sony is not a company known for video games, where Sega and Nintendo are *only* known for video games. Is Sony at a disadvantage because of the competition's instant credibility in this market?

DUBRUL: Actually, we have quite a bit of credibility in the Sony name. When we ask kids what it means to them, it means "high quality" and "consumer electronics." And when they hear that we're coming out with a game machine, they're not surprised—they go, "Oh,



yeah, that makes sense...and I'll bet you it kicks butt."

FLUX: Well, on the other hand, many gamers have already said, "Oh, Sony? No thanks; I don't want a game system from the people who made *Dracula* for the Sega CD." There's negative vibes connected to the Sony name because of some of Sony Imagesoft's low-caliber 16-bit software. Folks in the industry know that Sony Computer Entertainment and Sony Imagesoft are two different entities, but how are you going to convince the gamers?

DUBRUL: Well, the first thing you can do is print what you just said. [laughs] But again, I think it comes back to the games. I think when kids see Sony PlayStation games, they're going to be so excited about it that there won't be a particular notice to the publisher—they're going to be excited about the PlayStation itself. When I go to buy a Genesis game, I'm going to buy a game for my Genesis, not a certain publisher's game.

FLUX: Some really early adopters of the Saturn ran out and bought imported Japanese units, only to find that the American software won't run on them. Will Japanese PlayStation hardware run American games, and vice versa?

DUBRUL: No. I think you'll see that any game system released worldwide will have software developed for particular continents, and the PlayStation will be consistent with the Saturn and all others in distribution and sale of software.

FLUX: Is Sony expecting the PlayStation to build slowly in America, or skyrocket like it did in Japan?

DUBRUL: Skyrocket!

FLUX: Even with the competition?

DUBRUL: Well, we're going to have at least 20 games on the shelf for launch, 25 or more by the end of the September and over 50 by Christmas—they're going to be true 32-bit high-quality games.



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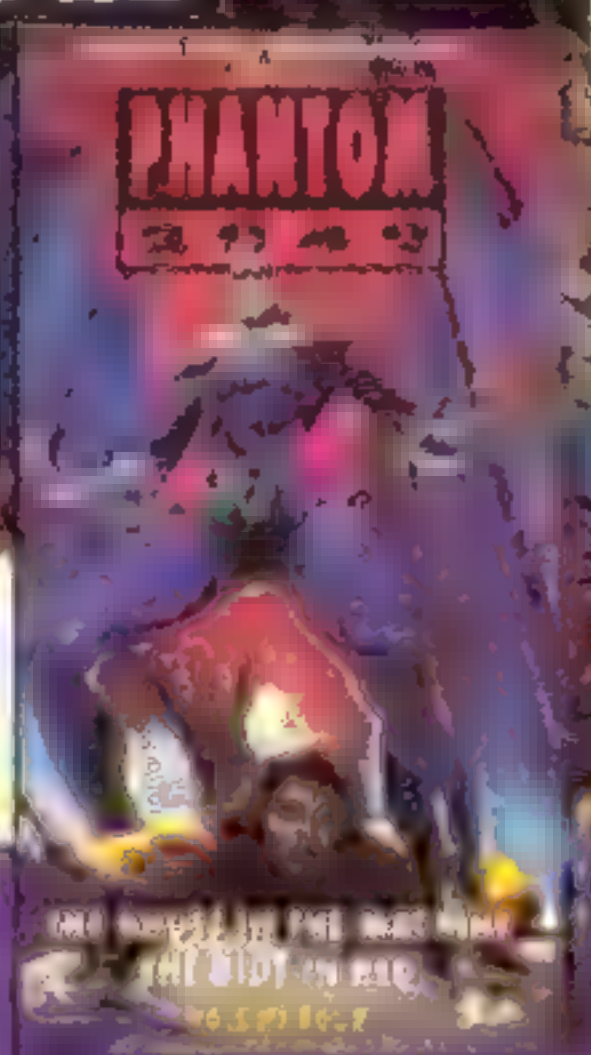
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It may reek of "Eau de Space Harrier" and not be nearly long enough, but *Panzer Draught* is still one of the best titles in the first wave of Saturn games. FLUX's powers that be have asked me to play through *Panzer* over...and over...and over...to provide you with a most bitchin' supply of hints, tips, and strategies, along with a completely unfounded rumor of a secret level. Enjoy!

The Basics

- You can fire your weapon in three ways. The first, and lamest, method is to press the A, B, or C button to fire a single beam. A better method is to rapidly press the A, B, and C buttons one after another. This "rapid-fire" method isn't as good as a real rapid-fire switch, but it's close. The third method is called the Homing Laser. Press and hold the A, B, or C button and move the gunsight over a target to "lock in" the target. Keep locking in targets until you're



ready to shoot, then release the button and enjoy the fire-power. This method works best against large groups of weak enemies

- If you hit 85% or more of the targets in an episode, you earn a credit (continue). If you hit 95% or more of the targets in an

episode, you earn two credits.

- Rumor has it that, if you somehow manage to shoot every target in the game and earn a flawless 100% accuracy rating, you get to play a hidden episode where you can fly in any direction. No idea if this is true, or if you can access the top-secret level with a cheat code, but now you have something to shoot for.

Episode 1

- Use the Homing Laser throughout most of the level. The only enemies you need to use the rapid-fire (ABC) method on are the long, blue, flying creatures and the end boss.
- Stay above the flowers. You can't kill them, but they can grab you and cause damage.



- Against the boss, use the Homing Laser to destroy the six escort ships, then use rapid-fire on the body of the flying ship. If you're having a hard time finding the

ship's weak spots, use the Homing Laser to locate them. Use the L and R buttons to keep the ship in your field of vision. When the ship is about to blow up, it starts launching torpedoes at you. The torpedoes can be destroyed with a burst of rapid-fire.



Episode 2

- Inside the cave, you're attacked by waves of sandworms. The first wave attacks you from all directions—turn and



shoot the circle of sandworms to continue onward. The final wave of worms inside the cave crawls up the walls, so aim high.

- Outside the cave are three giant worms jumping out of the desert sands. Use the rapid-fire method to blast their bodies as they jump, and to shoot the green slime they spit at you.

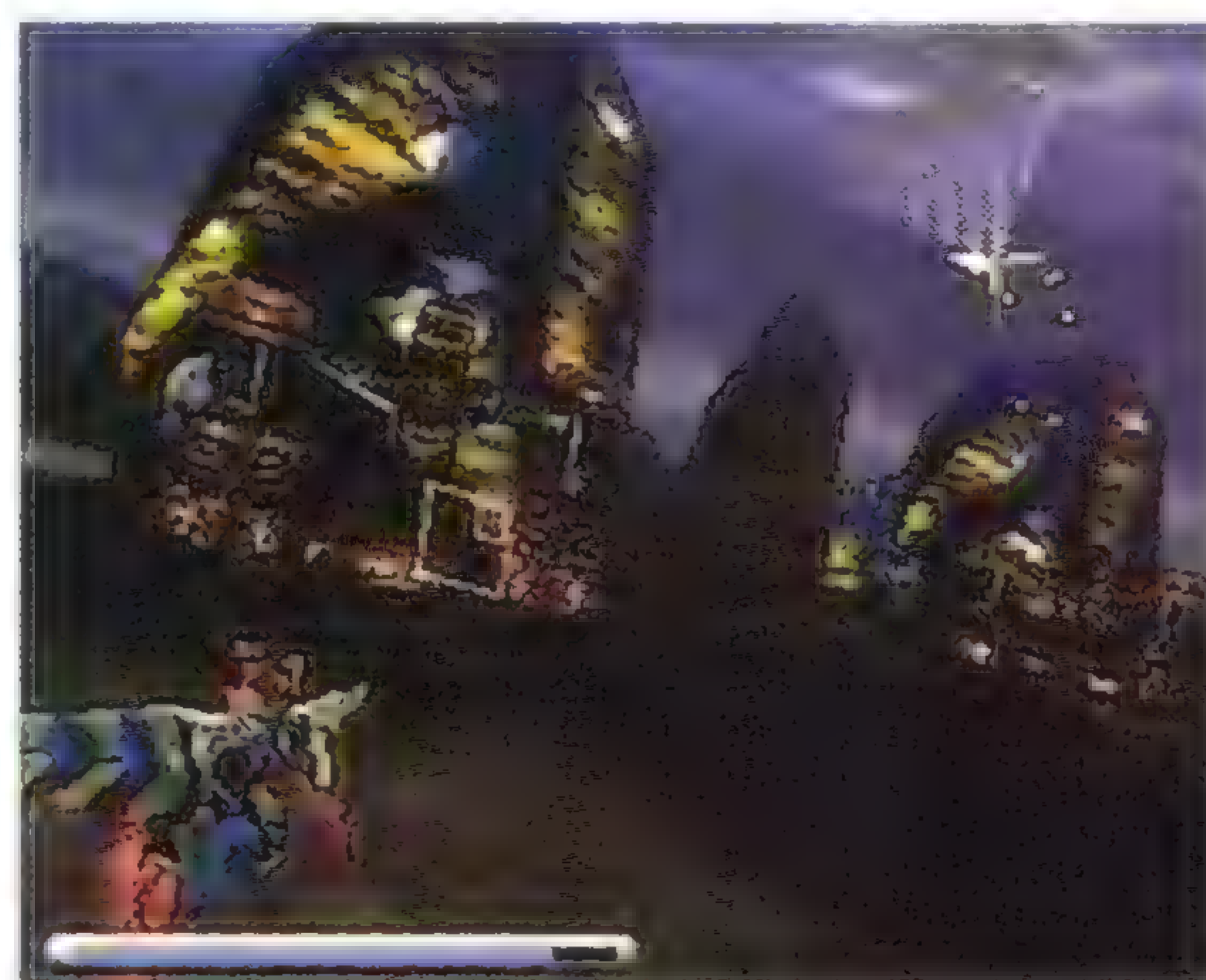
- The boss is a dragon that fires wide laser beams at you while you're distracted by the nearby tornadoes. Use the Homing Laser on the dragon for quick and easy damage. When the dragon gets behind you, it shoots missiles. Knock them down with rapid-fire lasers until the dragon is in front of you again.



Episode 3

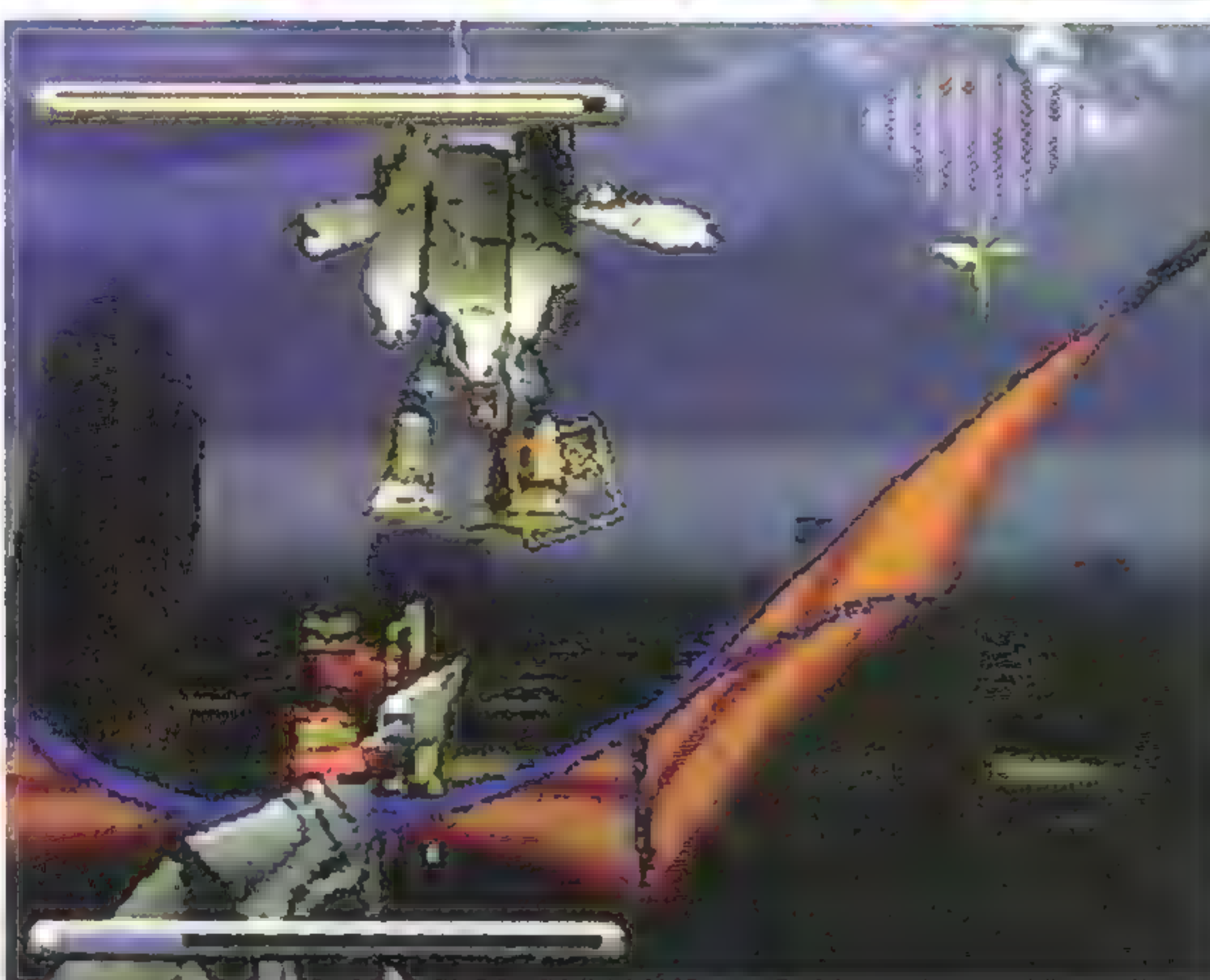
- There are three flying ships at the start of the episode. Shoot down (or avoid) the glowing orange cannonballs they fire at you.

- You need to use both the Homing Laser and the rapid-fire technique on the targets in this episode. Against the pumps, use rapid-fire; against the cannons and the ground sleds, use the Homing Laser. At one point, you fly in a circle around a



group of cannons; turn and take them out with the Homing Laser while shooting down their missiles with rapid-fire.

- The boss has two different forms. Against the first form, shoot the Homing Laser at the connecting point in the middle of the boss while flying up and down to avoid the blades. Against the second form, keep using the Homing Laser. When the boss jumps behind you, use the Homing Laser and shoot down any missiles fired in your direction. When the boss jumps back in front of you, quickly turn and shoot any more missiles headed for you. The more missiles you hit when the boss launches them, the fewer you need to shoot down when you turn around.



Episode 4

- You fly through the tunnels too fast to use the Homing Laser, so use rapid-fire to shoot the enemies as they appear.

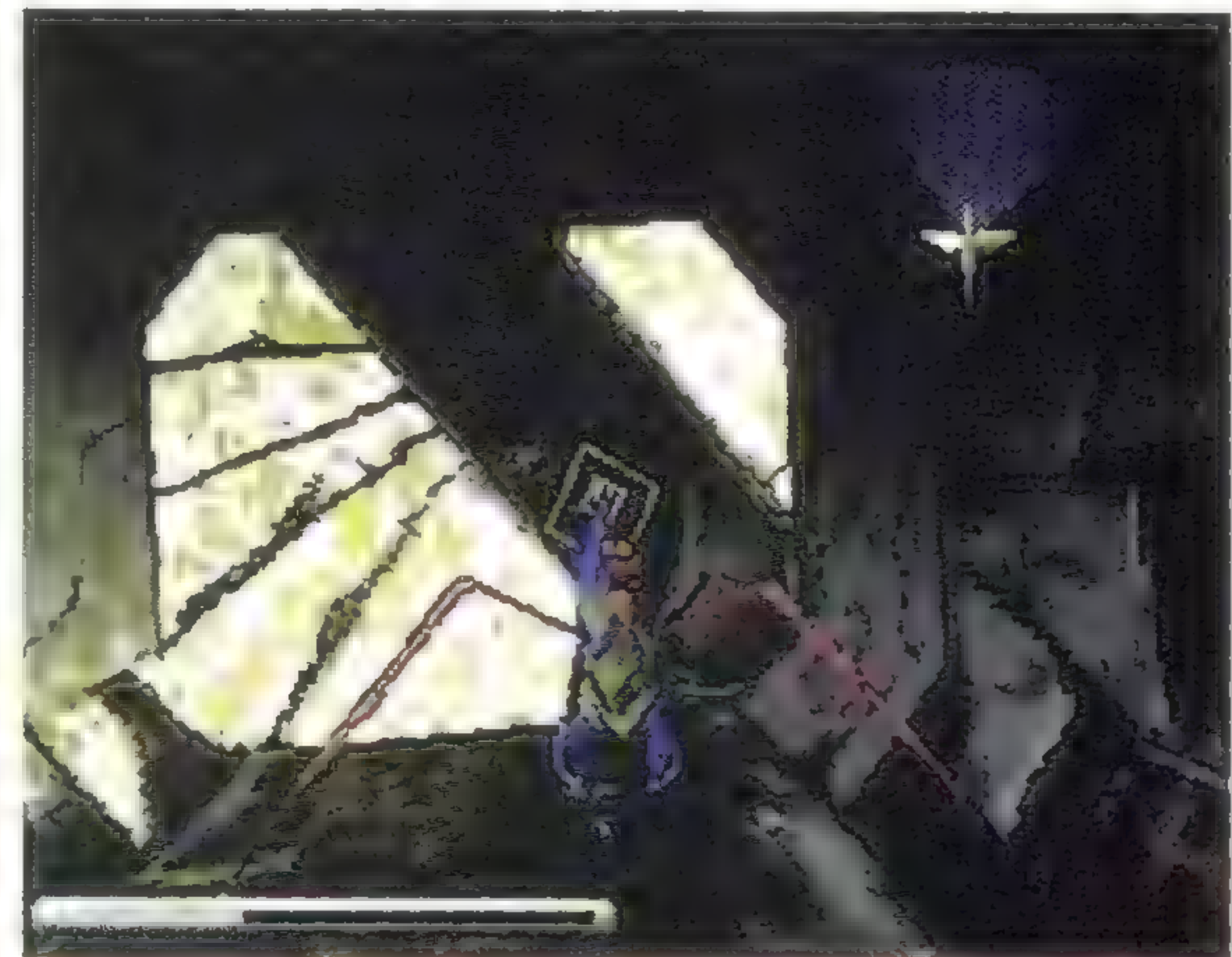
- The first waves of enemies are almost harmless, but they get more dangerous as you go. Watch for the green laser-firing ships and the red tractor-beam ships that lock onto your dragon and hold you in place while they shoot. The best (and only)



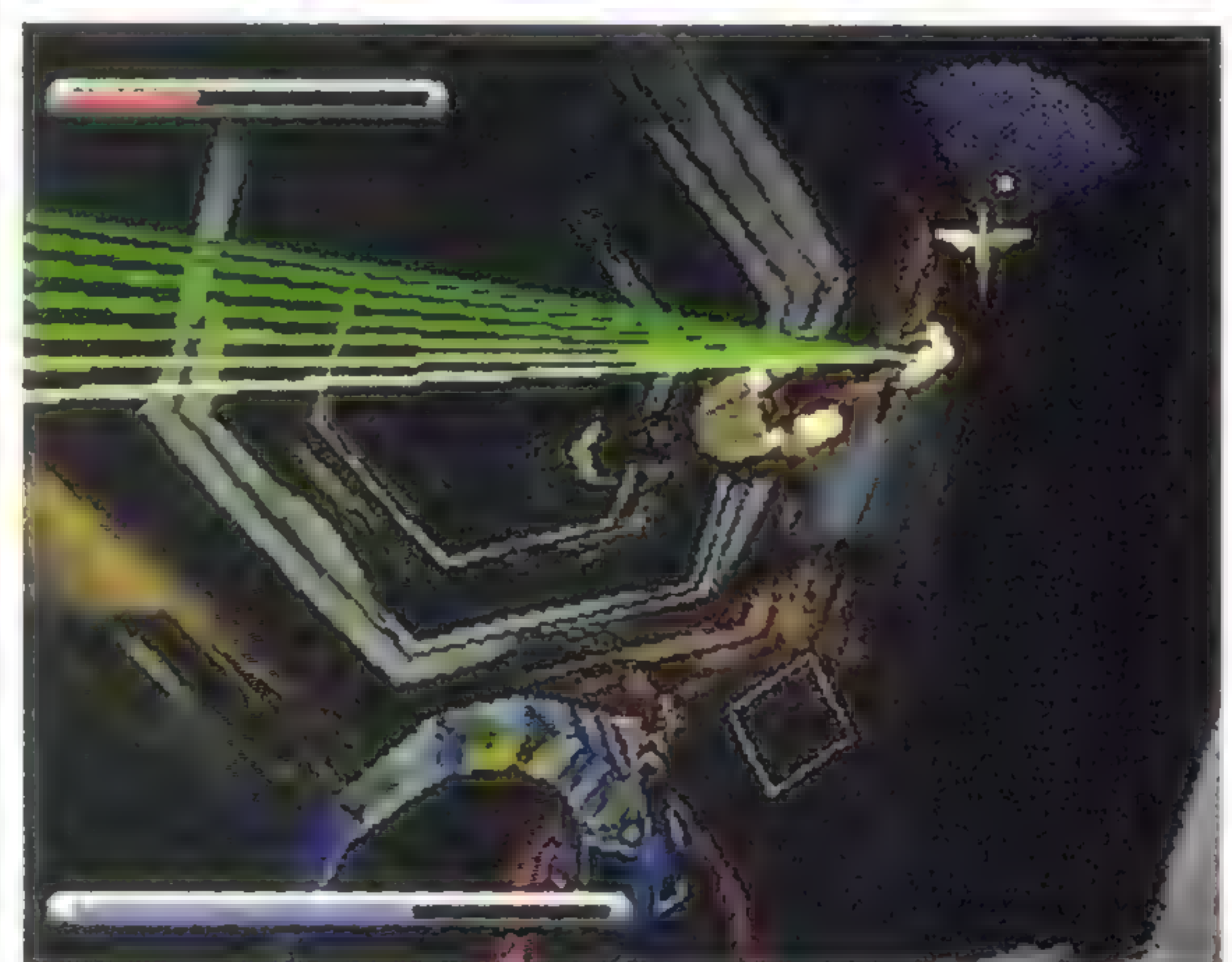
way to deal with the tractor-beam ships is to destroy them before they lock on.

- Near the end of the episode, some of the doors only open on one side, or only open halfway. Stay in the middle of the tunnel and fly in the proper direction to avoid smashing into a door.

- The boss is a robotic bird. When you try to use the Homing Laser, it shields itself,



so the only way to attack is with rapid-fire. Shoot the bird in the wings and dodge its wings when it flings them at you. After you've taken away half the bird's energy, it fires a green tractor beam out of its eyes. Avoid the beam while blasting the boss in the head to kill it.



Episode 5

- This episode is a sweet and simple shoot-fest. Not much strategy here—just blast everything in sight. The most difficult enemy targets are the ones with the white cones; use the Homing Laser on them to damage all of the cones with each shot.

- The boss is an indescribably weird ship with two escort ships. Shoot down the escorts, or avoid them until they fly off the screen, and then concentrate on the



boss. In its first form, the boss fires huge groups of fireballs at you. Shoot through the fireballs and blast the rotating red discs. Destroy all three discs and the boss changes into its second form. Here, you need to shoot the small blue areas on the belly of the boss while also shooting down the hexagonal missiles being fired at you.



Episode 6

• There's no boss in this episode, but plenty of enemies that do huge amounts of damage with their lasers, or by ramming directly into you. You can't kill the white dragon at the start of the episode, so don't let it distract you from the other



enemy targets.

- Stay low to avoid many of the lasers, and remember to use the Homing Laser against groups of baddies. When a flying white ship appears on the screen, you're almost finished with the episode.

Final Episode

- Use the Homing Laser to keep firing at the boss's head while you dodge its array of attacks, from a tail sweep to a massive laser beam. (When the boss's head starts to glow, you know it's getting ready to unleash the laser.) Also keep shooting down the tiny ships around the boss' head, as they like to drain your energy with small bursts of laser fire. When the boss gets directly behind you, swap to the rapid-fire method and nail it with easy shots to the head. Kill the boss and you get a weak ending sequence as your reward.



The Cheats

- A few words before you start cheating your brains out: 1) L and R are the L and R buttons, not Left and Right on the control pad. 2) You can enter one or all of these cheats at once, but make sure the



Episode Select is the last cheat you use, because you have to start the game when this cheat is used.

- **INVINCIBLE MODE:** At the Game Start/Options screen, press L, L, R, R, Up, Down, Left, Right. The words "INVINCIBLE MODE" appear on the screen. During the game, you're invulnerable to damage.

- **WIZARD MODE:** At the Game Start/Options screen, press L, R, L, R, Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Right. The words "WIZARD MODE" appear on the screen. The game moves at twice the normal speed.

- **ROLLING MODE:** At the Game Start/Options screen, press Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, Right, Down, Left, Up. The words "ROLLING MODE" appear on the screen. During the game, press Up and Left or Up and Right on the control pad to execute a 360-degree roll.

- **HARRIER MODE:** Access the Saturn's System Settings and change the language to Deutsch (German). Start up the game with the Start Application button. At the Game Start/Options screen, press Up, X, Right, X, Down, X, Left, X, Up, Y, Z. You should hear a sound effect. Start the game and your normal rider-and-dragon duo has been replaced with a giant-sized rider.



- **EPISODE SELECT:** At the Game Start/Options screen, press Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, X, Y, Z. The Episode Select appears on the screen, allowing you to start at any episode.





A Power Pop-Up
In Every Pack!



KEEN!



AVAILABLE AUGUST 1995

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In its brief but impressive existence, the Sony PlayStation has already been graced with two incredibly kick-ass 3-D fighting games: Namco's *Tekken* and Takara's *Toh Shin Den*. Each takes the realistic, 3-D fighting style made popular by Sega's groundbreaking *Virtua Fighter* to new levels and are now available here in the States for the PlayStation—hence this complete strategy guide for the renamed, but presumably unchanged, *Battle Arena Toshinden*. (And if the gameplay *has* been changed from the Japanese original, whomever at Takara is responsible should be killed. Nuff said.)

Fighting Basics

- The type of normal move you execute depends on how far away you are from your opponent. For example, a Hard Kick done at close range looks different than a Hard Kick from medium or long range.
- When selecting your character, press the Select button to switch between the char-

acter's default and alternate colors.

- If your character is slammed to the ground, you can enter the controller motions for a special move when you're on your back. Your character does the special move as soon as he stands up.
- Every character

has a throw move, and they're all done the same way. Press the control pad Back and press Hard Slash or Hard Kick.

Character Moves

- F = Forward, B = Back, U = Up, D = Down. Directions separated by a slash are diagonal moves. For example, F/D is Forward and Down.
- Slash = Weak or Hard Slash. Kick = Weak or Hard Kick.
- Super Moves are special moves that are harder to execute than other moves, but do more damage.
- Desperation Moves are powerful special moves that can only be done when your energy bar is flashing red. You can do them by executing the controller moves or by pressing the R1 and R2 buttons at the same time.

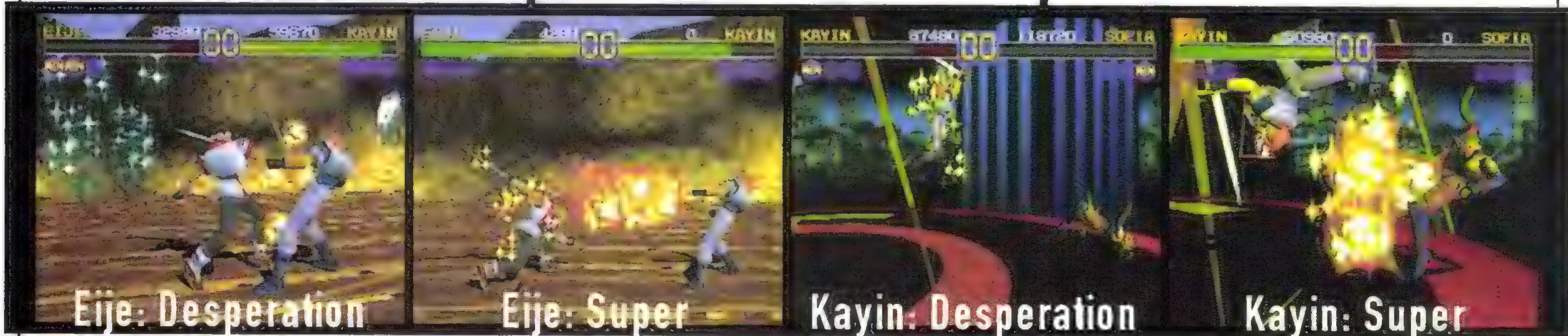
Eiji

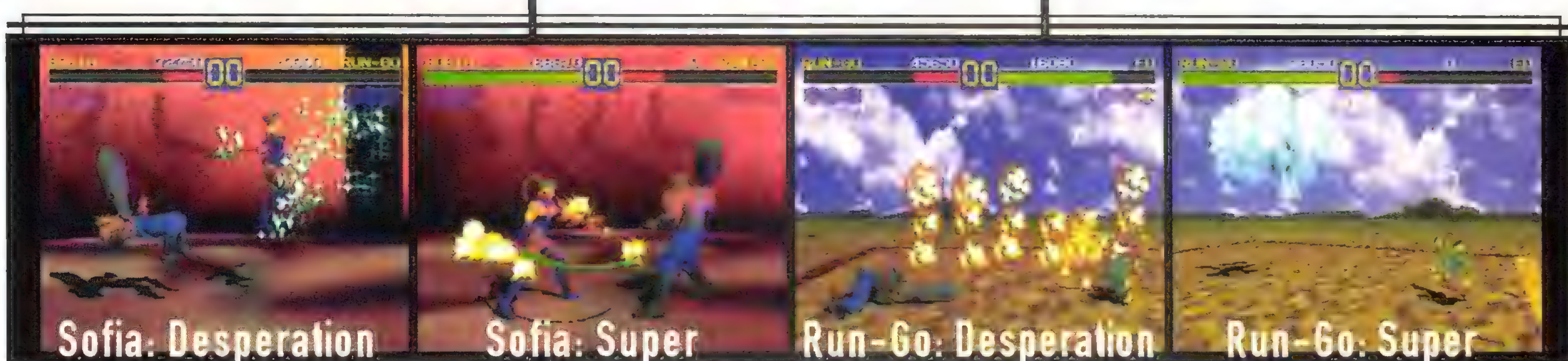
- FIREBALL: D, D/F, F + Slash. Eiji lets loose with a ball o' fire. Press Weak Slash for a slow, short-range Fireball or Hard



Slash for a fast, long-range one.

- SPINNING UPPERCUT: F, D, D/F + Slash. Eiji spins into the air and shows off his impressive-for-a-short-Japanese-guy vertical leap. Press Weak Slash and Eiji takes off immediately; press Hard Slash and Eiji dashes forward into the opponent for multiple hits before leaping skyward.
- FLYING KICK: Jump into the air, D, D/B, B + Kick. Eiji soars at the opponent and strikes him with a flaming case of athlete's foot.
- SLIDE KICK: D/F + Kick. A nasty, quick maneuver that knocks your foe on his off-guard ass.
- SUPER MOVE: U, D, U, D, F, B, F, B + Hard Slash + Hard Kick. Eiji produces a double-strength fireball. If you don't want to jump while doing the move, execute a Hard Slash before starting the up and down motions.
- DESPERATION MOVE: F, F/D, D, D/B, B, B/D, D, D/F, F + Hard Slash. Eiji freaks





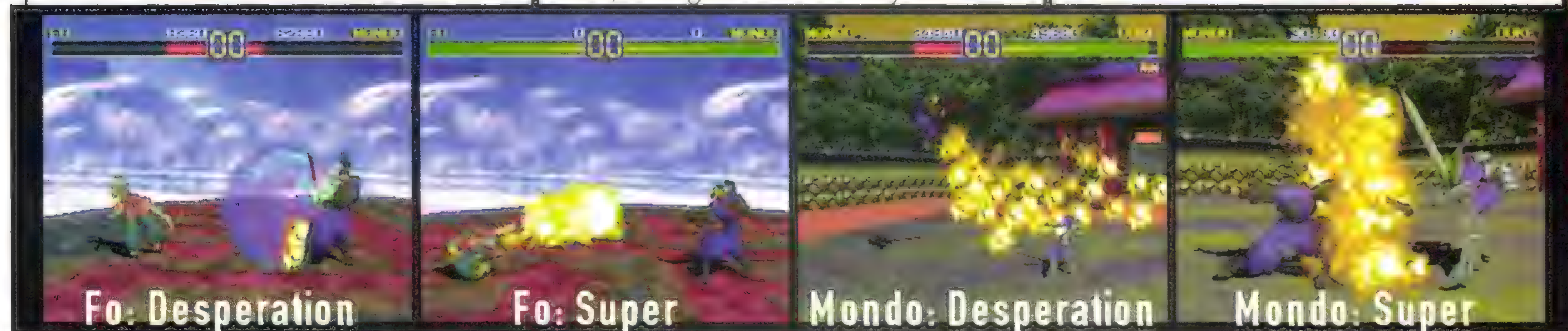
out and strikes his opponent with an incredibly fast series of punches and kicks, ending with a Spinning Uppercut. This move takes away about half (!) of the opponent's energy.

Kayin

- **SONIC SLASH:** D, D/F, F + Slash. Sonic Slash my butt; this is just a yellower version of Eiji's Fireball move. Press Weak Slash for a slow, short-range Sonic or Hard Slash for a fast, long-range one.
- **DEADLY RAISE:** F, D, D/F + Slash. Another rip-off of an Eiji maneuver, the Deadly Raise looks more than a bit like the Spinning Uppercut, except Kayin's version is tilted forward. Press Weak Slash

and Kayin jumps immediately; press Hard Slash and Kayin dashes forward before jumping.

- **FLIP KICK:** Jump into the air, D, D/B, B + Kick. Kayin somersaults in the air and shows off his electric foot.
- **SPLIT KICK:** D, D/B, B + Kick. Kayin shows off his Van Damme-esque flexibility with a painful-looking overhead kick.
- **SUPER MOVE:** F, F/D, D, B, B/D, B, F, B + Weak Kick + Hard Kick. Kayin does three Electric Split Kicks and an Electric Flip Kick in quick succession.
- **DESPERATION MOVE:** F, F/D, D, D/B, B, B/D, D, D/F, F + Hard Slash. Kayin strikes hard and fast with punches and kicks, then goes into a Deadly Raise.



Sofia

- **THUNDER RING:** D, D/B, B + Slash. A crack of Sofia's whip sends electric rings buzzing at her foe. Press Weak Slash for slow Rings or Hard Slash for fast Rings.
- **AURORA REVOLUTION:** F, F/D, D, D/B, B + Slash. Sofia does a lovely spinning pirouette while cracking the whip in a circle around her.
- **RATTLESNAKE:** D, D/F, F + Slash. Sofia goes off with a rapid series of whips.
- **TAUNT:** F, F/D, D, D/F, F, B, D + Slash. Sofia laughs heartily at her pathetic loser of an opponent.
- **SUPER MOVE:** F/D, D, D/B, D, D/F, B, F, D + Hard Slash + Hard Kick. Sofia's

whip starts blazing as she walks into the opponent.

- **DESPERATION MOVE:** F, B, F, B + Hard Slash. Sofia spins into the air and whacks her foe several times before landing.

Run-Go

- **FIRE STREAM:** D, D/F, F + Slash. Run-Go slams his mace into the ground and shoots some hot stuff at his opponent. Press Weak Slash for a slow, short-range Stream or Hard Slash for a fast, long-range one.
- **JUMPING HEAD BUTT:** F, D, D/F + Kick. Run-Go takes off into the air head-first. Press Weak Kick for a low jump or Hard Kick for a high jump.





- **SHOULDER SMASH:** F, F/D, D, D/B, B + Slash. Run-Go charges into the enemy and executes an uppercut with his mace.
- **RISING FIRE STREAM:** D, D/F, F, B + Slash. Run-Go unleashes a fire stream that goes straight up. Press Weak Slash for a quick, high Stream or Hard Slash for a slow, low Stream.
- **SUPER MOVE:** F/U, U, U/B, B, B/D, F, B, D + Hard Slash + Hard Kick. Run-Go does an extra-powerful Shoulder Smash.

ba!," a Japanese phrase that sounds remarkably like "Don't [naughty word starting with F]." Press Weak Slash for a quick Fireball or Hard Slash for one that lasts longer.

- **LEAPING KICK:** D, D/B, B + Kick. Fo goes high to knock a jumping opponent to the ground.
- **AIR BLUE FIREBALL:** Jump into the air, F, F/D, D, D/B, B + Slash. Fo does a Blue Fireball in mid-air. You can execute up to five Air Fireballs before falling back to the ground.
- **ROLLING BLUE FIREBALL:** F, B/D, D, D/F + Slash. Fo jumps into the air and rolls across the screen on a Blue Fireball.
- **SLIDE:** D + Hard Slash. Fo goes low and trips the opponent with his iron claws. You have to be at least a step away from the opponent to use this move.
- **SUPER MOVE:** Weak Kick (X), Weak Slash (Square), Hard Slash (Triangle), Hard Kick (Circle), B, F, B, F + Hard Slash + Hard Kick. Fo bends over and lets loose with a flaming fart.
- **DESPERATION MOVE:** F, B, B/D, D, D/F, F, B + Hard Slash. Fo shoots off a



- **DESPERATION MOVE:** D, D/F, F, D, D/F, F, B + Hard Slash. Mondo jumps up and shoots a spray of fireballs at the ground.

Duke

- **SOMERSAULT SLASH:** B, F, F/D, D + Slash. Duke dashes forward, smashes his opponent several times, and caps it off with the Somersault Slash. Very impressive.



Gaia: Desperation



Gaia: Super



Sho: Desperation



Sho: Super

Do a Hard Kick before starting the move so that you don't jump.

- **DESPERATION MOVE:** B, B/D, D, D/F, F, F/D, D, D/B, B + Hard Slash. It's a combination of the Fire Stream and the Rising Fire Stream.

Fo

- **BLUE FIREBALL:** F, F/D, D, D/B, B + Slash. Fo creates a giant blue sphere in front of himself while saying "Don paa

volley of four Blue Fireballs, running to the side after each one, and leaps into the air for a final Fireball attack from above.

Mondo

- **SPARKLING JUMP:** F, D, D/F + Slash. Mondo spins his spear and leaps in the air like he just don't care. Press Weak Slash for a low Jump or Hard Slash for a high Jump.
- **SPEAR SPIN:** B, B/D, D, D/F, F + Slash. Mondo walks forward while spinning the spear.
- **AIR FIREBALL:** Jump into the air, D, D/F, F + Slash. Mondo shoots a fireball at his opponent. You can use this move while doing the Sparkling Jump.
- **FOOT STAB:** D, D/B, B + Slash. Mondo rocks back and thrusts forward to stab his opponent's feet.
- **CHEST STAB:** D, D/F, F + Slash. Same as the Foot Stab, except Mondo aims for the chest instead of the feet.
- **SUPER MOVE:** F, B/D, D, D/F, B, F, F/D, D + Hard Slash + Hard Kick. Mondo does a flaming Spear Spin followed by an Uppercut.

- **TWO-HANDED SLASH:** D, D/F, F + Slash. Duke spins and strikes with a mighty overhead blow.

- **DROPPING STAB:** Jump into the air, D, D/F, F + Slash. Duke points his sword down and drops straight to the ground.
- **SPINNING SLASH:** F, B/D, D, D/F + Slash. Duke quickly spins and swings at his opponent's noggin.
- **SUPER MOVE:** F, F/D, D, B, B/D, B, F, B + Weak Slash + Weak Kick. Duke does a



Two-Handed Slash that also unleashes a fireball from the tip of the sword.

- **DESPERATION MOVE:** B, B/D, D, D/F, F, F/D, D, D/B, B + Hard Slash. Duke spins his sword and comes down strong with a two-handed chop.

Ellis

- **HOMING SOMERSAULT:** D, D/B, B + Kick. Ellis jumps and somersaults in a corkscrew motion at her enemy.
- **SLIDING UPPERCUT:** F, D, D/F + Slash. Ellis slides into her opponent and jumps straight up to deliver the facial.
- **FLIP KICK:** Jump in the air, D, D/B, B + Kick. Ellis executes a flip kick in mid-air. You can use this move during the Homing Somersault.
- **DIVING SLASH:** Jump in the air, D, D/B, B + Slash. Ellis dive-bombs into her opponent.
- **BOOMERANG RIBBON:** F, F/U, U, U/B, B + Weak Slash + Hard Kick. Ellis throws the ribbon strapped to her back, which returns to her like a boomerang. Do this short-range move quickly or Ellis jumps into the air instead of throwing it.

when the Hard Slash button is used.

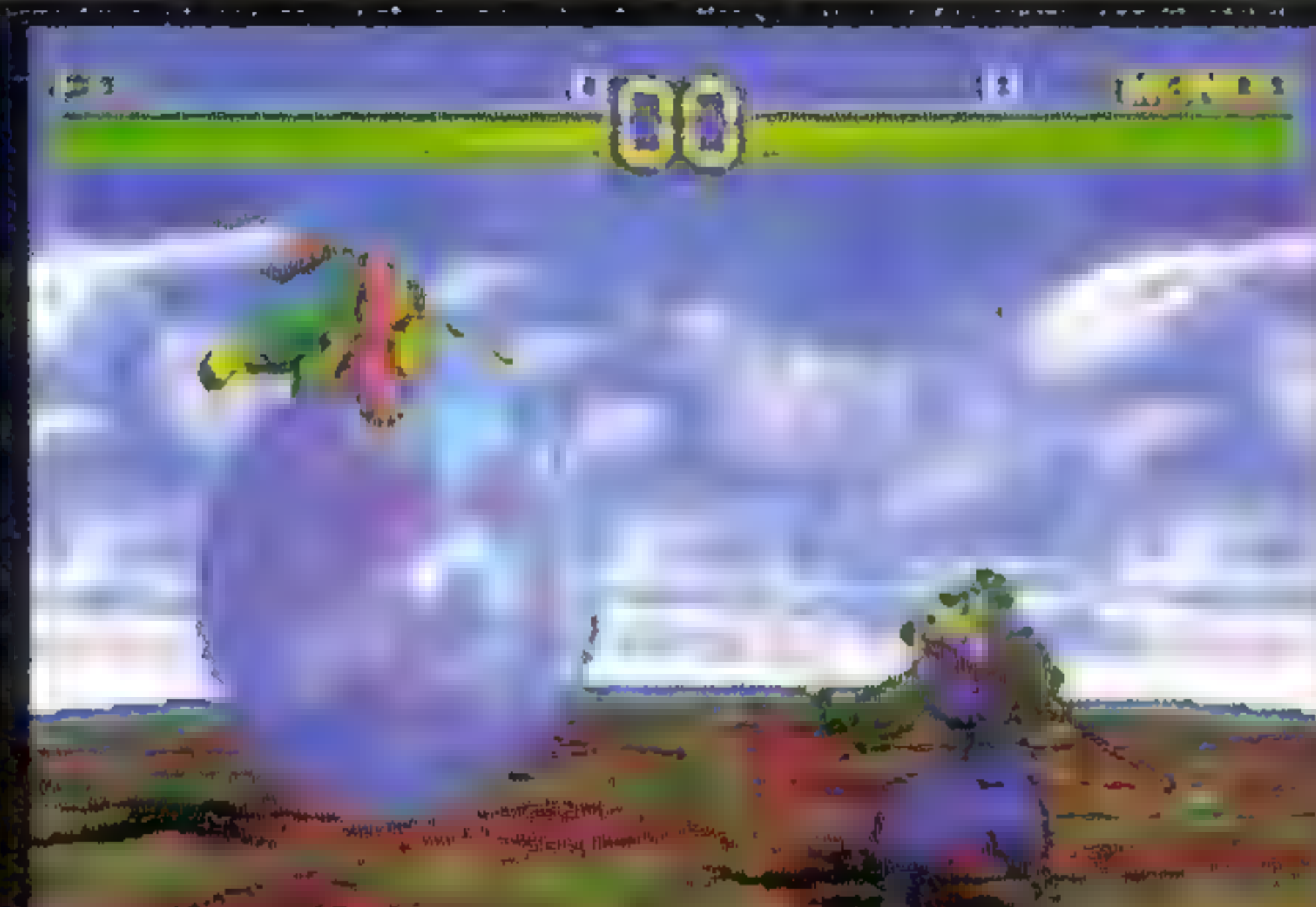
- **HAND OF FIRE:** F, F/D, D, D/B, B + Kick. Gaia holds out his hand, which erupts into green fire.
- **SUPER MOVE:** F/D, D, D/B, D, D/F, B, F, D + Hard Slash + Hard Kick. Gaia spins at his opponent and slashes like crazy.
- **DESPERATION MOVE:** F, F/D, D, D/B, B, B/D, D, D/F, F + Hard Slash. A massive fireball that takes away half the opponent's damage.

Sho

- **HOW TO PLAY AS SHO:** Start out by activating the Gaia code described above. At the main menu screen, when the options are sliding onto the screen from the sides, press Right, Down, Down/Right + Square (Weak Slash) on Controller 2 (as in two, as in the second controller). Once again, you should hear the "Fight!" sound. At the character selection screen, move the cursor onto Kayin and hold Down on the control pad as you press any attack button. This selects Sho.
- **DOUBLE FIREBALL:** D, D/F, F + Slash.

Secret Stuff

- **TWO BOSSES:** *Battle Arena Toshinden* has two bosses: Gaia and Sho. Gaia is the easiest one to reach; you just need to make it through the game on any difficulty level, using any number of continues. When you defeat Gaia, you're told how to execute the Desperation Move for your character. To reach Sho, the second boss, you have to play through the game at a normal difficulty level or higher, and you have to do it without using any continues. (You can continue against Sho, just not against earlier opponents.) When you defeat Sho, you're told how to execute the Super Move for your character, and you're given the game's real ending sequence.
- **CAMERA CONTROLS:** During the game, pause and go into the OPTIONS screen. Set the Control Type to one that doesn't use the top buttons for special moves (such as type 4). Go down to the Camera option and scroll through the choices until you find a new one called Your Self. Go back up to the Control Type and keep going until you reach types 33



Fo's air Blue Fireball



Sofia:
aurora Revolution



Sho's Double Fireball



Eiji's Spinning Uppercut

- **SUPER MOVE:** F/D, D, D/B, D, D/F, B, F, D + Hard Slash + Hard Kick. Ellis strings together her special moves into one brutal attack.
- **DESPERATION MOVE:** F, B, F, B + Hard Slash. Ellis somersaults in on her opponent and goes mental with a barrage of slashes and kicks.

Gaia

- **HOW TO PLAY AS GAIA:** At the main menu screen, when the options are sliding onto the screen from the sides, press Right, Down, Down/Right + Square (Weak Slash) on Controller 1. You should hear a voice say "Fight!" At the character selection screen, move the cursor onto Eiji and hold Up on the control pad as you press any attack button. This selects Gaia.
- **FULL STREAM:** B, B/D, D, D/F, F + Slash. Gaia shoots a series of fireballs. Press Weak Slash for a short-range Stream or Hard Slash for a long-range Stream.
- **SEA SLASH:** F, D, D/F + Slash. Gaia fires a tremendous stream of water at his opponent. This attack has unlimited range

Sho shoots off two fireballs in quick succession. Press Weak Slash for slow Fireballs or Hard Slash for fast Fireballs.

- **SPLIT KICK:** D, D/B, B + Kick. It's the same as Kayin's Split Kick, except for the cry of pain Sho makes while doing the move.
- **SPINNING UPPERCUT:** F, D, D/F + Slash. Don't think of it as a blatant clone of Eiji's Uppercut; think of it as a "tribute."
- **FLIP KICK:** D, U + Kick. Sho can use this move in the air or on the ground.
- **FLYING KICK:** Jump into the air, D, D/B, B + Kick. Just as cool-looking as Eiji's Flying Kick.
- **SUPER MOVE:** D, F, F/U, U, U/B, B, D + Hard Slash + Weak Kick. Sho is surrounded by a blue aura as he charges into the opponent and slices him about ten million times before taking off in a Spinning Uppercut.
- **DESPERATION MOVE:** B, B/D, D, D/F, F, F/D, D, D/B, B + Hard Slash. It's basically the same thing as Kayin's Desperation Move, the difference being the slashes and kicks followed by a lovely Spinning Uppercut.

through 40. The top buttons are now used to set your camera angles while paused *and* during the game. You also have a few other options:

- Pause the game and hold all four attack buttons, then press Select. This makes the PAUSE menu disappear. You can still rotate the camera. Press all the attack buttons and Select a second time to make the energy bars disappear. The top buttons now let you zoom in and out of the screen. Press the Select button on Controller 2 to advance the game one frame at a time. Hit the attack buttons and Select a third time to return to the Pause menu.
- **EASY SUPER MOVES:** Activate the Gaia and Sho codes described above. At the main menu screen, when the options are sliding onto the screen from the sides, hold Down/Right and press the X button on Controller 1. You'll hear "Fantastic!," and the menu options should turn white. During the fight, you can execute a Super Move by pressing all four top buttons and the Select button at the same time. (You need to be using a Control Type that makes all four buttons do special moves.)



DRAGON EYE JEWEL, you end up outside the Dragon Ruins Entrance. Use 15 of Ruby's 30 MP to level up Hiro's **WIND MAGIC** to Level 2, and the other 15 MP to save the game.

- Walk down the mountain trail until you're stopped by



Walk directly in front of it and press the A button to restore Hiro's and Ruby's HP and MP just like magic. Walk into the House to find **GRANDPA GWYN** chatting with Lord Leo. Talk to the soldiers first, then Leo, then old man Gwyn. When Gramps is done, talk to Leo again. After Ruby makes another nasty remark about Leo's sexual preferences ("She thinks I'm *what?*"), he and his guards leave for the Blue Spire. Grandpa goes upstairs, and a few seconds later, the codependent old coot is calling for you. Before you climb up the ladders, read the **RESEARCH LISTS** in the northwest corner of the house. (Press the A or C button to read them.)

- Head up to Gwyn and you should quickly notice that something goofy is happening at the Blue Spire. Talk to Gwyn and watch the fireworks. After the dazzling display, Gwyn goes back into the house. Follow him down and walk down the stairs into the basement. Examine all the bookshelves to read about Dragons, Althena, Lunar, and oh-so-much more.



a complete walkthrough of the first part of *Eternal Blue*, the anxiously-awaited sequel to Working Designs' hit role playing game—and one of the only Sega CD's really worth its salt—*Lunar*.

Dragon Ruins

- After a real purty intro sequence which shows a buck-naked (but disturbingly nipple-free) Althena waking from her long sleep, and Hiro scoring the **RIGHT**



LORD LEO, captain of a rather cool Dragon ship called *Destiny*, and head off Althena's Guard. He gives you a stern talking-to before flying away. Continue down the trail to the **SALYAN DESERT** at the bottom. Now walk south, east, and north along the water to **HIRO'S HOUSE**. Along the way, you get into your first battles against the incredibly wimpy **SAND SHARKS**. If you somehow manage to get slammed by the Sharks, gobble one of the **HERBS** in your inventory to restore your HP. Keep walking along the coastline until you reach Hiro's House, with the Dragon ship *Destiny* double-parked outside. You can board the *Destiny*, but there's not much to see just yet. (One of the soldiers goes off on an amusing tangent about Althena's bod.) After your brief tour of the *Destiny*, go to the House.

Hiro's House

- See that **BLUE STATUE** in the yard?

When you're done getting hooked on phonics, open the chest and take the **ANCIENT KNIFE**. Equip the Knife and scurry upstairs to Gwyn.

- Talk to Gwyn and he gives you the **LEFT DRAGON EYE JEWEL**, then



Walk east across the bridge

joins your party. Now you can walk east across the bridge and north through the Desert to the Blue Spire. Alas, Hiro is still too wimpy for the trip. Walk around the Desert outside Hiro's House and get into fights with the Sand Sharks to increase Hiro's experience. Use the statue in the yard of the House when you're low on HP or MP. Boost Hiro to at least Level 3 before you start the long walk to the Spire.

Blue Spire

- Walk to the **BLUE SPIRE ENTRANCE** and Gwyn puts the Left



HIRO PUT THE RIGHT DRAGON EYE JEWEL IN THE SOCKET.

Dragon Eye Jewel into the head, but nothing happens. Walk up to the **RIGHT EYE SOCKET** and press the A/C button to use the Right Dragon Eye Jewel—the Entrance door will slide open.

- There are two floors inside the **BLUE LABYRINTH**. On Floor B3, you have to push **BLUE BUTTONS** in the floor to



Push the Blue Button

open doors that block your progress. On Floor B2, you have to enter four rooms with **FLOATING ORBS**, and press the A/C button to place each orb onto its pedestal. When you place all four orbs, you form a bridge leading across to the door to Floor B1.

- Floor B1 leads into the **BLUE SPIRE GARDEN**. Walk north to the fountain statue and press the A/C button to restore your HP and MP. If you have enough MP (and you should), save the game and boost Hiro's Wind Magic before entering the Blue Spire.

- The most dangerous enemy inside the Blue Spire is the **CRYSTAL KNIGHT**, with a brutal attack that does up to 30 HP of damage with one hit. Use your most powerful attacks on him to kill him before he can strike.

- When you reach Floor 7F, Gwyn starts



Joined by Lucia

looking around for the secret room to the top floor of the Spire. Walk north to the **FLOATING GLOBE** and press A/C to zap yourself into the secret room. Walk north again to the **FLOATING GREEN CRYSTAL**. One bitchin' animation sequence later, you've been joined by **LUCIA**, a beautiful girl from the Blue Star who says she's looking for Althena. (Did you notice how much Lucia looks like Althena? Makes ya wonder...)

- Climb down the Blue Spire with Lucia in



HIRO GWYN LUCI
Lucia casts a spell

tow. She uses her powerful magic to kill anything that gets in your way, so let her do the hard work in battle while you defend yourself. Keep going until you reach the Blue Spire Garden. Walk south of the Garden fountain and Lucia floats into the air to look for Althena. As Gwyn

sharply observes, she's certainly not human. But you ain't seen nothin' yet; after Lucia returns to the ground, the entire party is surrounded by an evil force that Lucia refers to as **ZOPHAR**. Zophar sucks away Lucia's powers and places a curse on her soul.

- Leave the Blue Spire Garden into the



Kill the Guardian statue

Blue Labyrinth. Remember that freakishly large **GUARDIAN** statue? It's been awakened by the wacky series of events, and you have to kill it to get past. Use Hiro's **BOOMERANG** to attack the Guardian, and Gwyn's Heal spells to keep everyone healthy. It shouldn't take more than three or four Boomerang hits to kill the Guardian.

- When you make it to the Blue Spire Entrance, you're attacked by *three* Guardians. Stay alive for a few turns and your bacon is saved by Lord Leo, who uses the Dragon Ship Destiny to blast the Guardians into chunks of Spam. The self-loving Leo won't let you leave the Spire without asking about Lucia, but he falls for Ruby's story and rushes into the Spire to look for the Destroyer. Leave the Spire and return to Hiro's House.

Hiro's House

- Lucia crashes on Gwyn's couch while Gwyn goes downstairs to look for a cure to the curse. Talk to Lucia until Gwyn returns from the basement. The bad news: he can't find a cure. The good news: he thinks she can be cured by **RONFAR**, a priest in the village of **LARPA**. After Ruby tells Lucia to keep her paws off hunky Hiro, walk outside to the boat. Gwyn can't go with you, but



Lucia sleeps

he's set you up with a ship. Board the ship and you automatically sail across the sea to the west side of the Salyan Desert. Walk south and west to Larpa Village.

Larpa Village

- There's a **GAMBLER** inside the **TAVERN** who wants to play dice with you, betting his house against Ruby, who is understandably against the idea. Go into the **SANCTUARY** and donate 100S at the **SHRINE** to try to take the curse off Lucia. Alas, the donation does jack squat. One of the worshipers tells you that Althena is residing in Pentagulia.

- Go into the **MAYOR'S HOUSE** at the north end of the village and pay him for information. He doesn't know about Ronfar, but he does know about a guy named Tonmar who croaked a half-decade earlier. Thanks for nothing, baldy.
- Talk to the people near Ronfar's House on the west edge of the village. One of them tells you to look for Ronfar at the Tavern. Return there and talk to the gambler again. He insists he's not Ronfar, but that he can tell you where he is if you beat him at dice. Try rolling the dice once, and quit after you lose. Talk to Ronfar (for it really is him) again and poor Lucia passes

out. The suddenly compassionate gambler carries Lucia off to his house on the west side of the village. Follow him there.

- Talk to Ronfar until Leo enters the house. After an intriguing conversation, Leo leaves. Talk to Ronfar again and accept his offer to **PLAY DICE**. Bet on even or odd (it doesn't matter which) and you win the game—along with Ronfar's help. Talk to Lucia so she joins your party, then talk to Ronfar.
- Keep heading north until you emerge back in Larpa. Walk south and open the



chest for a **STAR LIGHT**, then head north and into Secret Pass 3. Follow it east and walk through the door. You drop into an area behind the Sanctuary. Walk to the door on the west side and go inside.

- Enter the main room of the Sanctuary. Ronfar tries to break the spell, but can't. His failure conjures up a sepia-toned **FLASHBACK** of when he failed to save his beloved **MAURI**. When the flashback ends, the enraged Ronfar kicks out the magical jams and lifts the curse. Return to Ronfar's House, where all of you catch some Zs.
- When you wake up, Lucia's missing. Ronfar is sleeping and you can't wake him. Walk into the village and ask the residents if they've seen her. The Tavern bartender tells you that she went to see the Mayor.



Visit the mayor—he tells you that Lucia went to catch a ship to Pentagulia. Walk to the south end of the village. Talk to Lucia on the dock until she leaves for Dalton. Head back for Ronfar's House and he meets you at the top of the dock. When you tell him about Lucia's departure, he joins your party.

AUTHENTIC. FIERCE. BRUTAL.

DRAGON

THE BRUCE LEE STORY™



JEET KUNE DO AERIAL ASSAULT!



**REALISTIC
NUNCHAKU ACTION!**



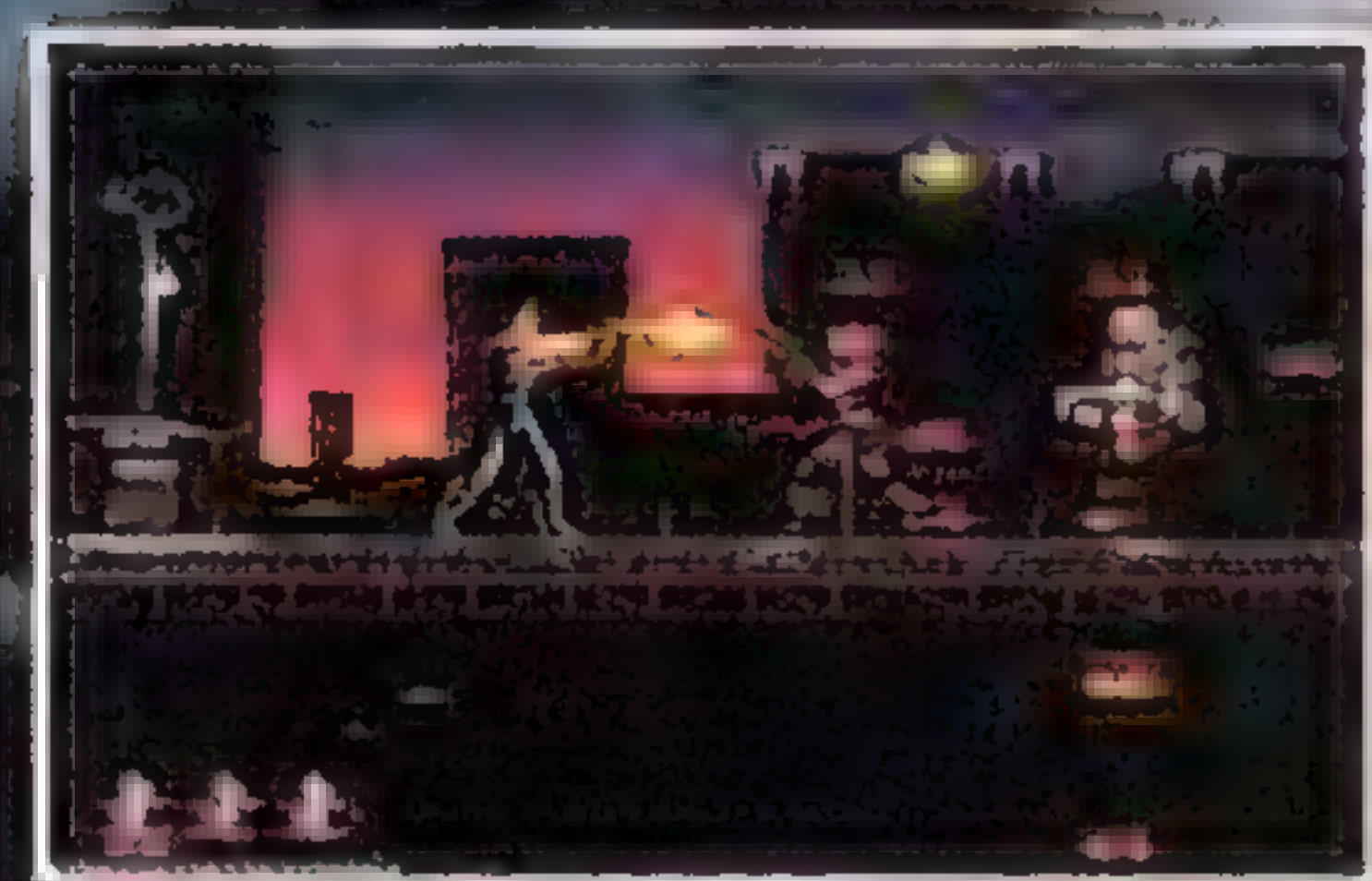
**MIRROR MATCH: BRUCE LEE
VS. BRUCE LEE!!!**



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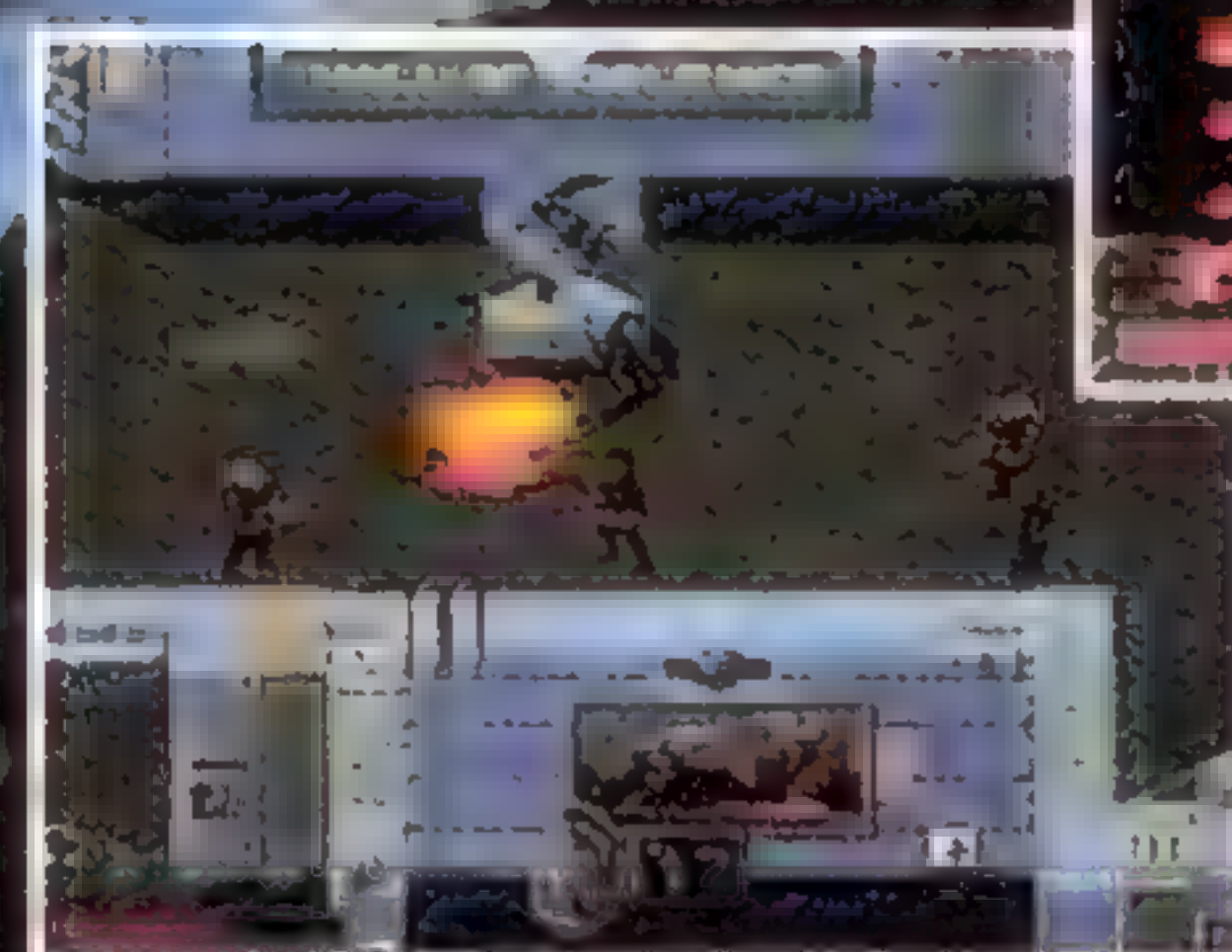
A LEGEND FROM THE PAST...

A FUTURE OF DESTRUCTION!

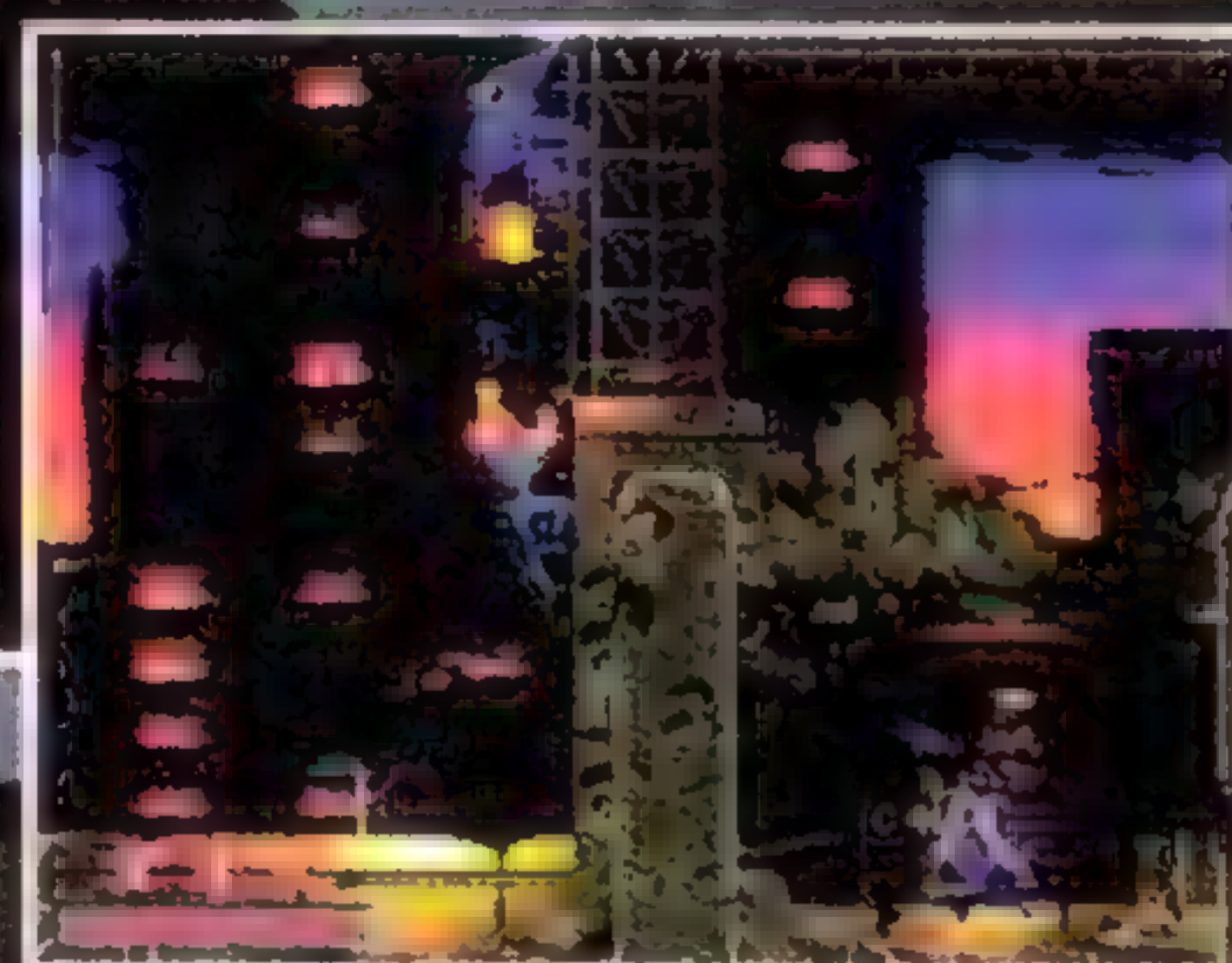


**SEND A MANIAC
TO CATCH A MANIAC!**

STALLONE SNIPES DEMOLITION MAN



**YOU ARE NOW ENTERING
THE HALL OF VIOLENCE!**



**WHERE ARE THE
HOSTAGES?**

SUPER NES® GENESIS™ SEGA CD™



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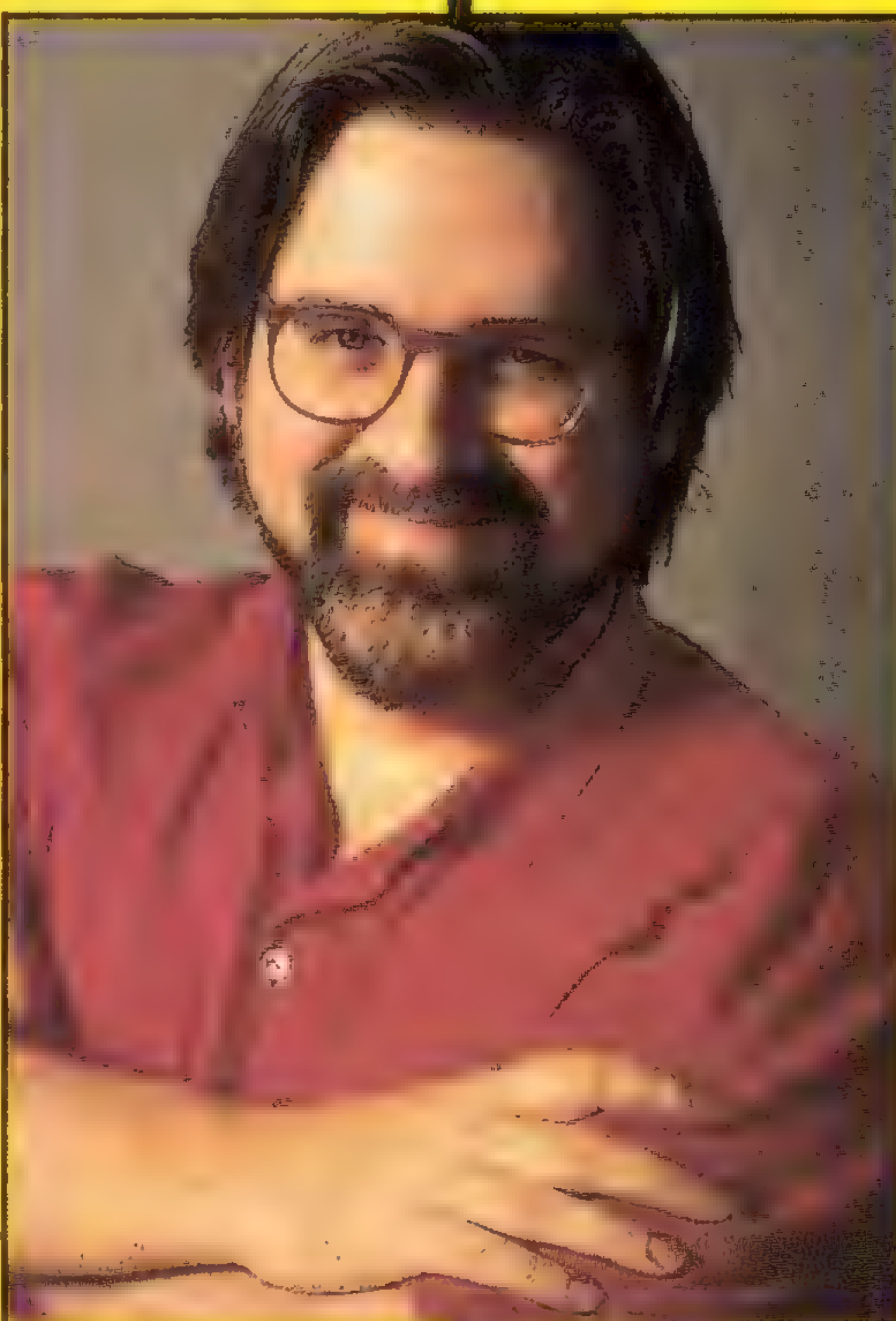
Matt Groening—creator and **mastermind** behind *The Simpsons*—gives a behind-the-scenes look at the evolution of America's favorite dysfunctional TV family and expounds on the **horrors** of being a comic book publisher

by **Alan Paul**

Once upon a time, in the not-too-distant past, Matt Groening was a fairly despondent young man. An aspiring music journalist working in a record store, Groening struggled to adapt to life in smoggy, cocaine-infested Los Angeles, where he had recently moved from the friendly confines of Portland, Oregon. To express his frustration and fears, Groening began drawing cartoons which he sent to friends as letters. The comic's running title—"Life In Hell"—pretty much summed up his situation. Groening's friends thought the cartoons, starring a scared rabbit named Binky and filled with bitter wit and pungent insight, were pretty damned funny and told him so. Thus encouraged, the amateur cartoonist printed up a zine of his strips, which he threw on the shelf alongside the punk magazines at the record store where he worked.

That was in 1977. By the following year, *Life In Hell* had been picked up by the LA Weekly, the city's alternative newspaper. Groening soon developed a rabid local following and the strip slowly spread to alternative news weeklies throughout the country. By 1986, *Life In Hell* was carried in a host of papers nationwide and had even spawned several books. That year, television producer James Brooks approached Groening about animating Binky, Akbar, Jeff

and the other *Life In Hell* characters for short spots on Fox-TV's *Tracy Ullman Show*. Though Groening was very interested, he was also hesitant.



"I had never done animation before and I had a thriving career as a weekly comic strip artist with *Life In Hell*," he explains. "I was afraid that the experiment in animation might fail and I didn't want to subject my own characters to that failure, so I created new characters."

Of course, Groening's experiment in animation did not fail. By January, 1990, the *Ullman* show was canceled, while the cartoonist's new characters—a family called the Simpsons—had a show of their own. Today, six years later, every character on the most popular animated show in television history is a cultural icon. Bart, the only Simpson not named after a member of Groening's real family (it's simply a reworking of the word "brat"), has become the patron saint of all juvenile delinquents, past, present and future.

Groening now rules over an empire which includes *The Simpsons*, which continues to air every Sunday night on Fox, while also running nightly in syndication; the still thriving—and biting hilarity—*Life In Hell*,

which now runs in 250 papers in the U.S. and Canada, and two comic book imprints: Bongo, which puts out *Simpsons*-related titles, including the brand new *Treehouse Of Horrors*, and Zongo, an underground line which recently debuted with Gary Panter's *Jimbo*.

Groening recently took a break from his busy schedule to sit down with FLUX and discuss such pressing topics as Bart's relationship to Beavis & Butt-head, the state of comic books today and his endless battles "with the guys who smoke big cigars."

FLUX: How involved are you in the day to day life of *The Simpsons* these days?

MATT GROENING: Well, I go to work every day. I stick my nose in where I feel I can improve the show. *The Simpsons* is a very smooth-running machine, with talented people at every level. I feel my job is to make sure we maintain the soul of the show. Sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees and I try to nudge the show so it will keep on track. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

FLUX: Do *Life In Hell* and *The Simpsons* occupy very different parts of your brain?

MATT GROENING: I definitely switch gears. *The Simpsons* is a collaboration by a lot of very funny, talented people: actors, writers, musicians and animators; *Life In Hell* is just me. Both pro-





jects help me cope with life. I like *The Simpsons* because it's a chance to hang around really funny people and I like going home and holing up in my studio and drawing my comic strip every week, too.

FLUX: Have there been points where you felt that the characters on *The Simpsons* have gotten too far away from your original conception?

GROENING: Yes. The completed shows are never as good as I wish they would be; I'm happy overall with the show, but I always wish they could be better. Also, there have been occasions where business interests have gotten in the way of the creative stuff and I felt *The Simpsons* were exploited in creepy ways. Part of the reason for that is because people think you can do anything with a cartoon. We're asked to promote non-*Simpsons* things on behalf of Fox that no live actor would ever consent to.

FLUX: Do you feel a real commitment to the integrity of the characters—to treating them as if they were real actors?

GROENING: Yeah. It kills me when they aren't treated with respect.

FLUX: But can't you control how they're treated? Do you own the characters?

GROENING: I don't own *The Simpsons*—Fox does. I try to make the guys who smoke cigars realize that it's in their own interests to keep the show top-notch and not exploit it and run it into the ground. Sometimes I'm successful, sometimes I'm not.

FLUX: Does that mean that if something made you so mad that you quit, *The Simpsons* would continue without you?

GROENING: Well, that's not a possibility. There's plenty of sleazy, behind-the-scenes stuff that goes on, but I have always reminded myself that my main relationship is with my audience. Having to deal with a few obnoxious Hollywood characters comes with the territory, and I have no choice but to accept that.

FLUX: Have you always had consistent conceptions of the characters? For instance, did you know that Krusty was Jewish before the famous "Jazz Singer" episode?

GROENING: No. That was a sudden inspiration on the part of a couple of writers. But Krusty is one of my favorite characters. In fact, we tried to do a spin-off of Krusty once but the guys with big cigars couldn't agree on how to carve up the pie, so it didn't happen. I wasted months of my life trying to develop this thing only to

have it fall apart for the usual, nefarious Hollywood reasons.

FLUX: In the first season of *The Simpsons*, Smithers, Mr. Burns' faithful assistant, was black—but since then he's always been white. What happened there?

GROENING: Animation error. All the creative work is done in Los Angeles, but the inking and painting and camera work is done in Korea. It was one of the earliest episodes, the third or fourth, and somebody made the wrong color choice off a chart. That's the only reason. We like to say that he was on vacation and came back with a tan.

FLUX: Do the Simpsons have yellow skin and only four fingers because they live by a nuclear plant?

GROENING: You could view that as symbolic content, sure. The real reason the Simpsons are yellow is so that they will look like nothing else on television.

FLUX: What's it like to realize that you've created something which has seeped into popular culture to such a large extent?

GROENING: Well, that was part of my plan. I really thought that most television punishes viewers for paying attention; it's a good thing to watch in a distracted, half-asleep way. And I thought it would be great to do a show that actually rewards you for paying attention. That's why the main titles change every week, what Bart writes on

the blackboard changes, the saxophone solo

changes, the couch gate changes and all that stuff. That's why we sneak so many gags in there. We try to jam as much stuff in there as possible. Sometimes we come up with really good jokes and say, "Oh, no, that's only a freeze-frame joke." That is, a joke that you're only going to get if you videotape it and go back and freeze-frame it. We always stick those into every episode.

FLUX: Have you discovered any famous person who is a fan of *The Simpsons* that surprised you?

GROENING: Well, just about every famous person who does a voice is a fan of the show. Michael Jackson, for instance, is a fan of the show.

FLUX: So that was really him?

GROENING: Yes. He didn't want to be credited. [laughs] Dustin Hoffman is another one who didn't want to fess up. It's funny because we've had these bigshots who were willing to do the

Life in Hell

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show but were ashamed to admit it. So we have a new demand: if you're willing to do the show, you have come clean and admit it. I just completed something which I really, really wanted to do, and that is to get all the former Beatles on. Ringo was first, then we got George Harrison, but Paul McCartney was a real hold-out. We finally came up with a script which he agreed to do. It's called "Lisa The Vegetarian" and it will be on next season.

FLUX: Is it difficult for you to come up with scripts which are both funny and acceptable to the guest stars?

GROENING: Sometimes more so than others. Michael Jackson presented a particular creative problem because he's such an icon: how do you put Michael Jackson in a *Simpsons* universe? And the solution, which I must take credit for—the idea, at least, because I didn't write the script—was to have Michael Jackson play a 300-pound white guy who thinks he's Michael Jackson. Everybody was keeping their fingers crossed that he would sort of laugh when he read the script—and he did.

FLUX: Have you ever had someone agree to do the show, then read the script and call you up saying, "Are you insane?"

GROENING: [laughs] Yes, it's happened several times. I really can't comment further because we're still trying to get all these people, but there are several stars who backed out, Prince being one. Prince's people actually sent us their own script, and....well....it just wasn't our thing.

FLUX: What do you consider your proudest achievement when it comes to *The Simpsons*?

GROENING: Well, it thrilled me to death when George Bush said America needs to be more like the Waltons than the Simpsons. He said that on a Monday and on the following Thursday we had the Simpsons watching George Bush say those words and Bart said, "Hey, man, we're just like the Waltons. Both families are praying for an end to the depression." As a result, of course, George Bush went down in defeat.

FLUX: Being that those are your political leanings, have you ever woken up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat that you've helped make [Fox owner, publishing mogul and famous Republican supporter] Rupert Murdoch even more rich?

GROENING: [long pause] Well, I can't say that there's any magic happy studio out there where everyone's nice and wonderful. Again, I remind myself constantly that my relationship is with my audience.

FLUX: What do you think is the worst thing about television?

GROENING: The worst things happening around TV right now are the incredibly inane arguments taking place about sex and violence on TV, which are disguised political diatribes to appeal to bigots. The fact is, TV is violent and sleazy, but it's the nature of the medium when images are replaced by images—the ultimate message is that nothing really matters, and that's the insidious thing about television.

FLUX: Do you ever feel like you had a hand in inspiring *Beavis and Butt-head*?

GROENING: Well, I think we warmed up the audience for *Beavis and Butt-head*. I'm a fan, and I'm very glad it's around. It took the heat off of Bart for a while. [laughs]

I think one of the things *The Simpsons* did was really open the door for animation on television to take more chances. Before *The Simpsons*, we had 30 years of TV shows that mostly looked like they were from the Hanna-Barbera assembly line—the same kinds of characters, voices and plots over and over. The success of *The Simpsons* made people take more chances. Television now is full of animation that has the distinct look of individual animators: *Ren & Stimpy*, *Beavis and Butt-head*, all the Nickelodeon cartoons, this new show on Comedy Central, *Dr. Katz*, which is really funny and has very minimalist animation. The quality of these things varies, but none of them looks like the same old thing.

FLUX: Speaking of animated shows, you recently had a major fight with Fox and producer James Brooks over using *The Simpsons* to plug *The Critic*, a new Fox animated series (which

has since been canceled). Do you have anything further to say on that subject?

GROENING: Yes, I do. *The Simpsons/Critic* crossover episode was for me an issue of artistic integrity. Any creator worries about the lives of his characters and the satisfaction of the fans. I removed my name from the crossover episode because I was concerned about the implication that I had created or produced *The Critic*, which had been printed in a lot of newspapers, and reinforced by the crossover and the manner in which it was made.

I tried to convince everyone associated with the show not to do such a cynical thing, because I thought that fans of the show would see it as nothing but a pathetic attempt to advertise *The Critic* at the expense of *The Simpsons*. I don't know of any other way to be true to fans but to work as hard as I can to keep the quality of the show up to their expectations and to do so without violating *The Simpsons* universe. I'm not knocking *The Critic*, but I didn't want to take credit for it—and neither does Bart.

FLUX: Following that tiff, Brooks made some snippy comments about you in the press....

GROENING: Yep.

FLUX: What's your relationship with Brooks like?

GROENING: Well, I don't like to be called names. [laughs] What else can I say?

FLUX: How do your parents feel about having Marge and Homer named after them?

GROENING: They love it for the most part. My father has only taken me to task one time. He was disturbed that when the Simpsons' car broke down in the desert, Marge carried the tire back to the gas station; he said that Homer shouldn't have allowed Marge to do that. [laughs] That's the only thing he's ever objected to. It's fine for Homer to throttle Bart, but he can't allow Marge to carry a tire.

FLUX: Are the characters patterned after your family beyond their names?

GROENING: The only real parallel to my family and *The Simpsons* may be some of the sibling rivalry between Bart and Lisa I actually had with my sisters, Lisa and Maggie. My father isn't fat and bald. He's a retired cartoonist and filmmaker. My mother doesn't have blue hair, though when I was young it was quite tall.

FLUX: Have any of your other family members ever taken offense to anything on the show pertaining to their characters?

GROENING: My sister Lisa loves the character, but she's taken me to task over other things many times. She gets a little concerned when her kids may imitate some of the behavior they see.

continued
on Pg 76

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EVIL ERNIE

GO flux



Evil Ernie,
comics' favorite
knife-wielding,
teenage
psychopath,
packs his bags
and heads south
—of Heaven,
that is.

BY ROBERT J. SODARO

YOU CAN ALMOST SEE THIS AS A question on some bad MTV game show: "What do zombie movies, speed metal, renegade, teenage, psychotic anti-heroes, buxom babes with big hair and skimpy outfits and over-the-top, mondo ultra-violence have in common?" Buzzzz! "Uhh....Evil Ernie?" Correct!!

For those of you who've had your heads buried in X-books over the past few years, you might not be aware of the fact that Evil Ernie, spin-off apparition Lady Death and parent company Chaos Comics are currently all the rage on the comics scene.

Since the first appearance of Evil Ernie back in 1991, there have been four Ernie series, two Lady Death miniseries and/or specials, a couple of trading card sets, posters and all sorts of new nifty-cool waiting in the wings. So what exactly is all the buzz about? And what makes this pair of off-the-cusp-of-hell, star-crossed, almost-lovers the raciest couple on the planet? Brian Pulido, founder of Chaos Comics and creator of Evil Ernie and Lady Death, expresses some bewilderment over the hows and whys of Ernie and Lady D's phenomenal success, but did offer this insight on his creations: "I'm a big fan of horror—always have been. I was looking at horror movies from the Eighties as I created Evil Ernie. I basically wanted to do the opposite of what I was seeing in those movies."

What Pulido was seeing, was that these movies generally featured psychotic knife-wielding adults preying on screaming kids. So he went the

Evil Ernie is TM and © 1995 Chaos Comics. All rights reserved.



other way to make his lead character, an undead youth named Ernie, the story's bloodthirsty antagonist. In addition to his passion for zombie flix, Pulido also used the book *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson (which became the movie *The Omega Man*) for inspiration when creating Evil Ernie, not to mention his NYC film school education, knowledge of producing music videos and love of heavy metal music.

"I feel that pop culture is heading toward darker material, because we live in a darker world," says Pulido. "These

superhero guys are sort of silly. We put a lot of research into Lady Death's mythos. I just think the bottom line is that darker characters are going to increase in popularity. We live in a darker world now and they're easier to relate to."

Evil Ernie first made his debut in 1991 in a five-issue creator-owned black & white book put out by Eternity Comics (read: pre-Ultraverse Malibu), which has since been reprinted in full blood-soaked color as a Chaos graphic album. The Chaos crew also produced four issues of *Rack And Pain* for Dark Horse, but Pulido and his crew determined that while producing comics

for established publishers was definitely a way-cool gig, actually publishing for themselves was what they really wanted.

"Chaos Comics was formed in

just about a dollar and a dream," says Pulido. "We pulled together about \$1,500 between my wife and I. People often think we're a huge corporation. The success we've encountered this year is just mind-blowing to us."

As well it should, given the fact that the current Lady Death series shipped numbers that would make the corporate suits at Marvel giddy. "In the last four months we've sold over 725,000 books. That's an average circulation of 175-180,000 on Lady Death." With staggering numbers like these under his belt, Pulido is highly confident about Chaos' upcoming projects.

Up first is *Evil Ernie: Straight To Hell*. According to Pulido, the special bond between Evil Ernie and Lady Death had been severed—thanks to Purgatori, vampire goddess of judgment and Lady Death's arch enemy—at the conclusion of the last Lady Death series. Up to this point, Evil Ernie has always had the ability to fall asleep and visit Lady Death in his dreams. When the story picks up in *Straight To Hell*, Ernie's been trying very unsuccessfully to reach her. While wandering around in Hell, Ernie encounters various monsters and demons and eventually he butts heads with one of Lady Death's allies, Creamator. Needless to say, they don't get along and engage in a very strange and supernatural battle. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

For those who gravitate toward Evil Ernie's sadistic, murderous sensibilities, the *Straight To Hell* series will provide enough smash-mouth violence to stop a PTA meeting dead in its tracks.

"People know that Evil Ernie is typically directed to people who are 18 and above," says Pulido. "It's ultra-violent, yes—let's put this into perspective. Other comic books have violence. *Violator* had violence. *Savage Dragon* has violence. *Spawn* has violence. Very popular books, occasionally ultra-violent. The violence we see in these comic books is no more violent than movies we see every day. Kids get to see things like *Die Hard With A Vengeance* and *Pulp Fiction*. It's no more violent than the five o'clock news."

So while the *Evil Ernie vs. The Superheroes* one-shot had a "Mature Audience" disclaimer, *Straight To Hell* will not. But according to Pulido, *Straight To Hell* does feature some unparalleled grossness.

"But I think it's important to point out that Evil Ernie is *not* real. He's not based on reality. There is no such thing as an undead teenage psychotic. People who read it understand the joke. Of course it's over the top and ultra-violent—but strangely, it's all in good fun."

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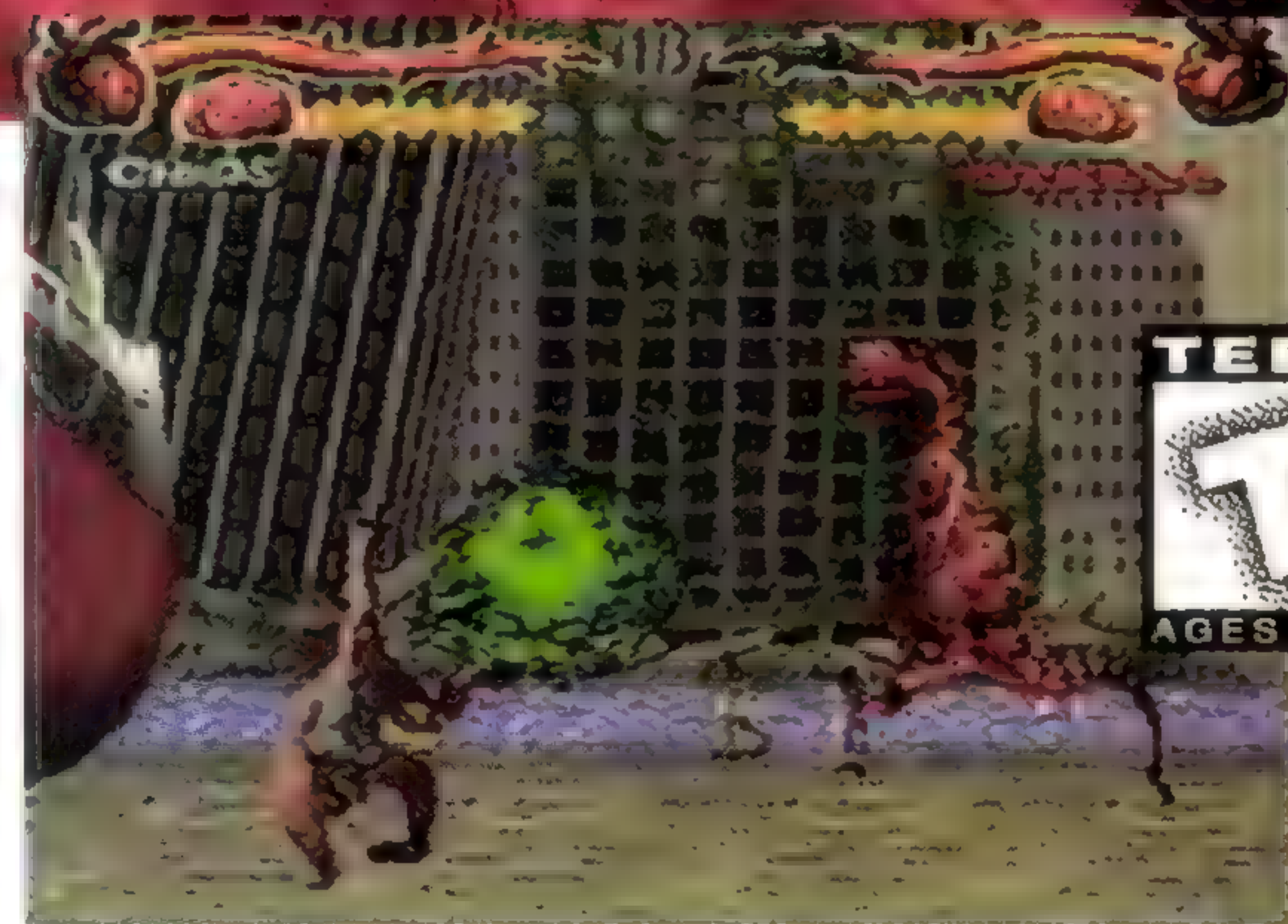
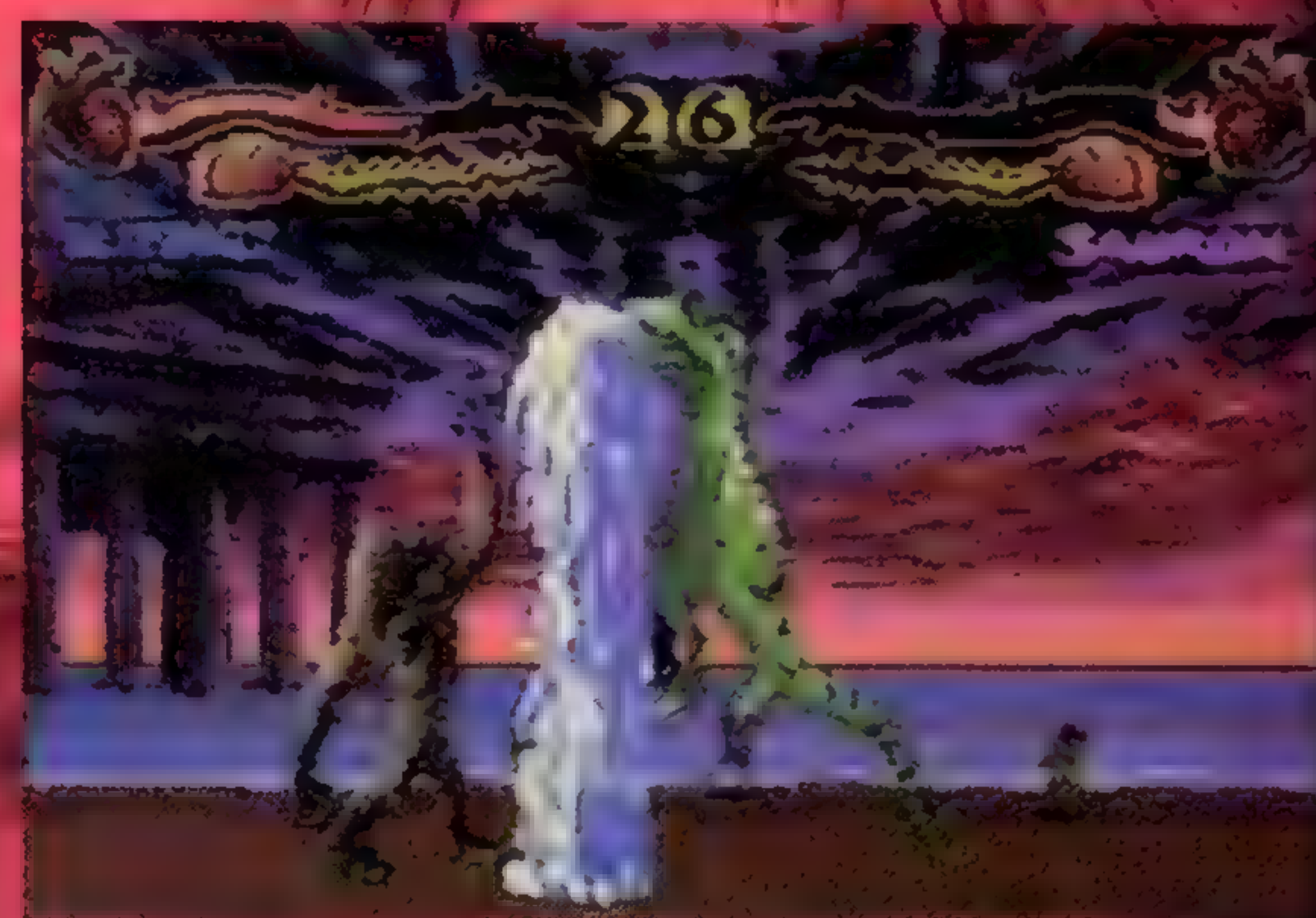
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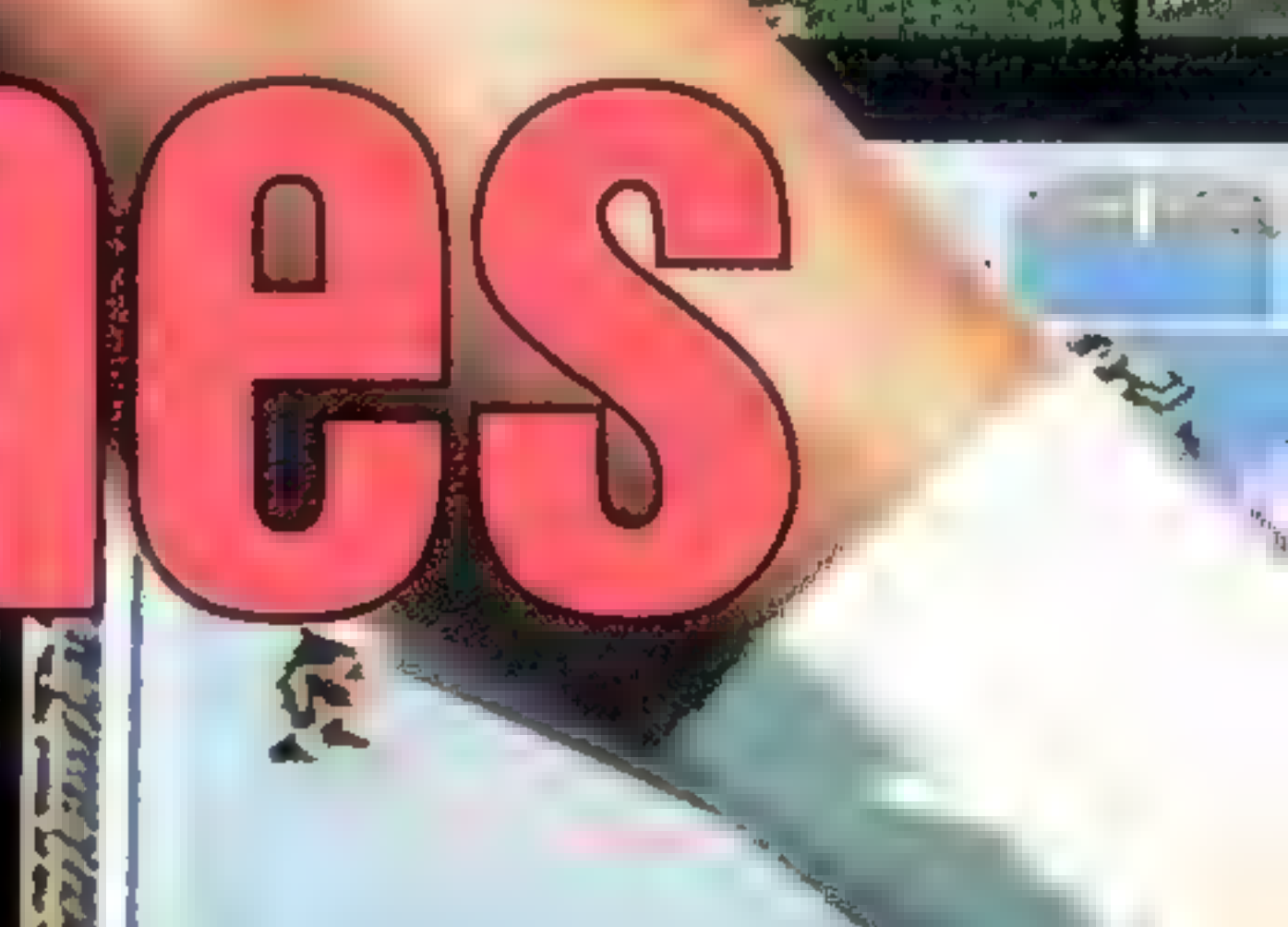
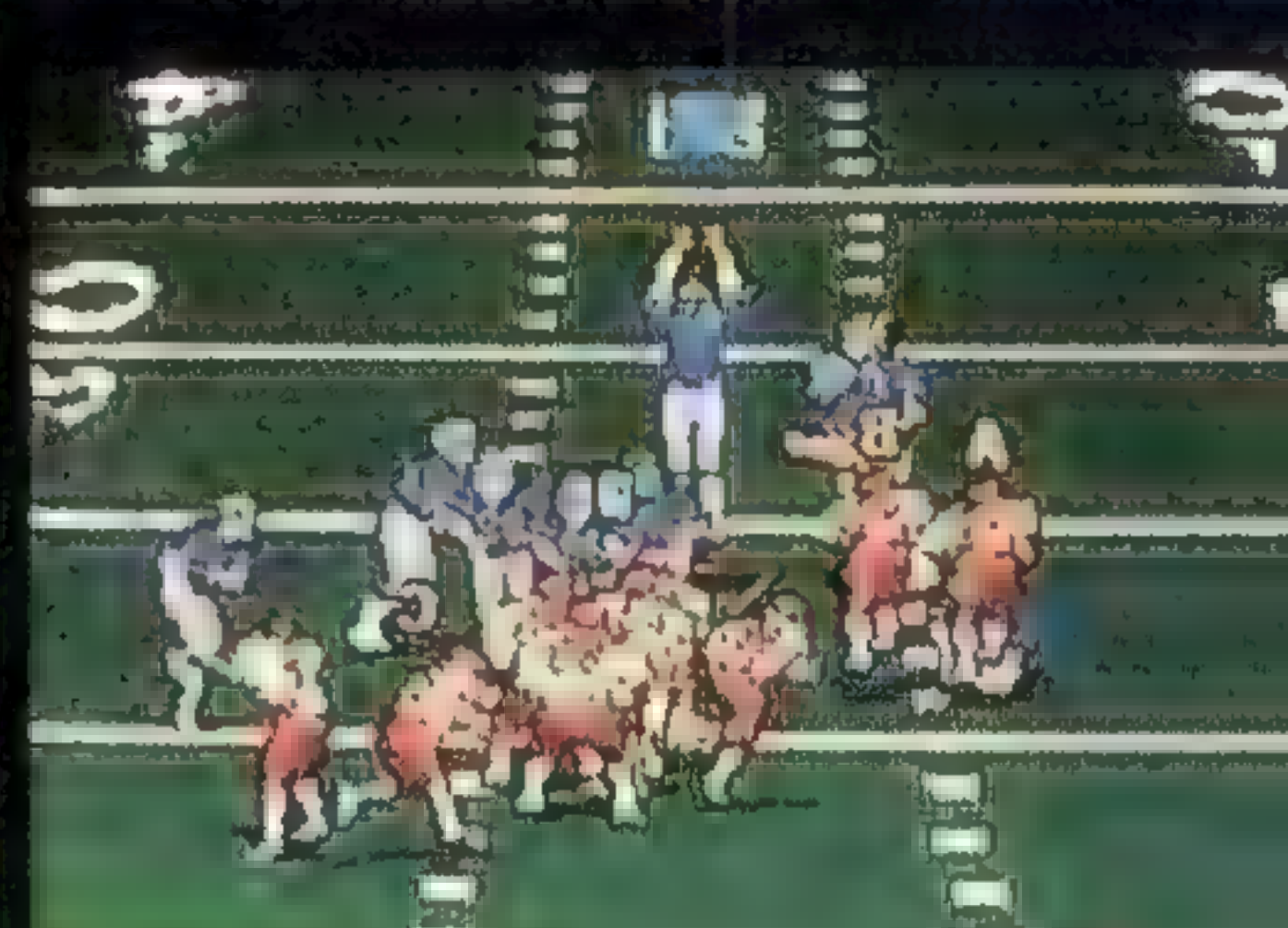
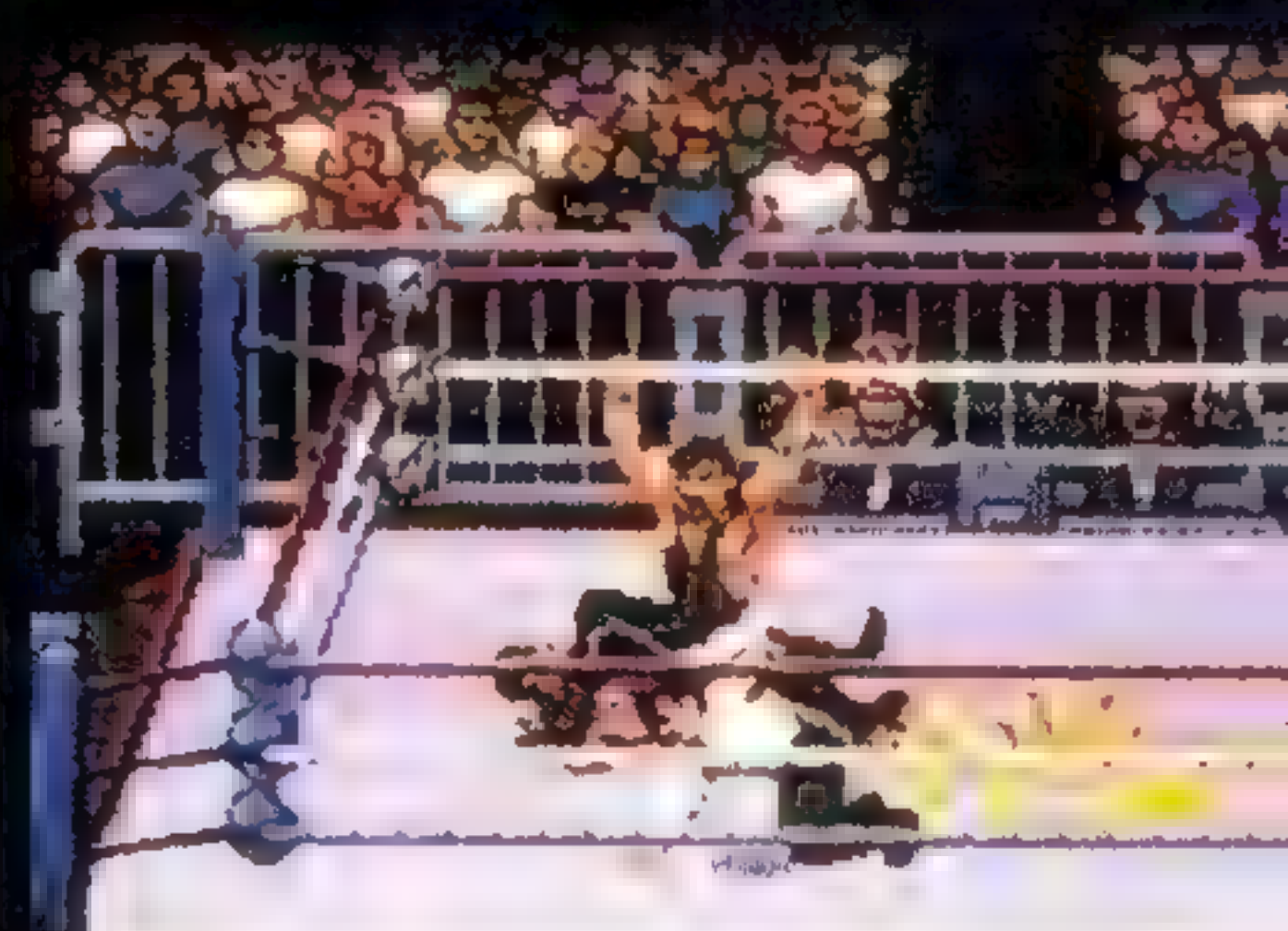
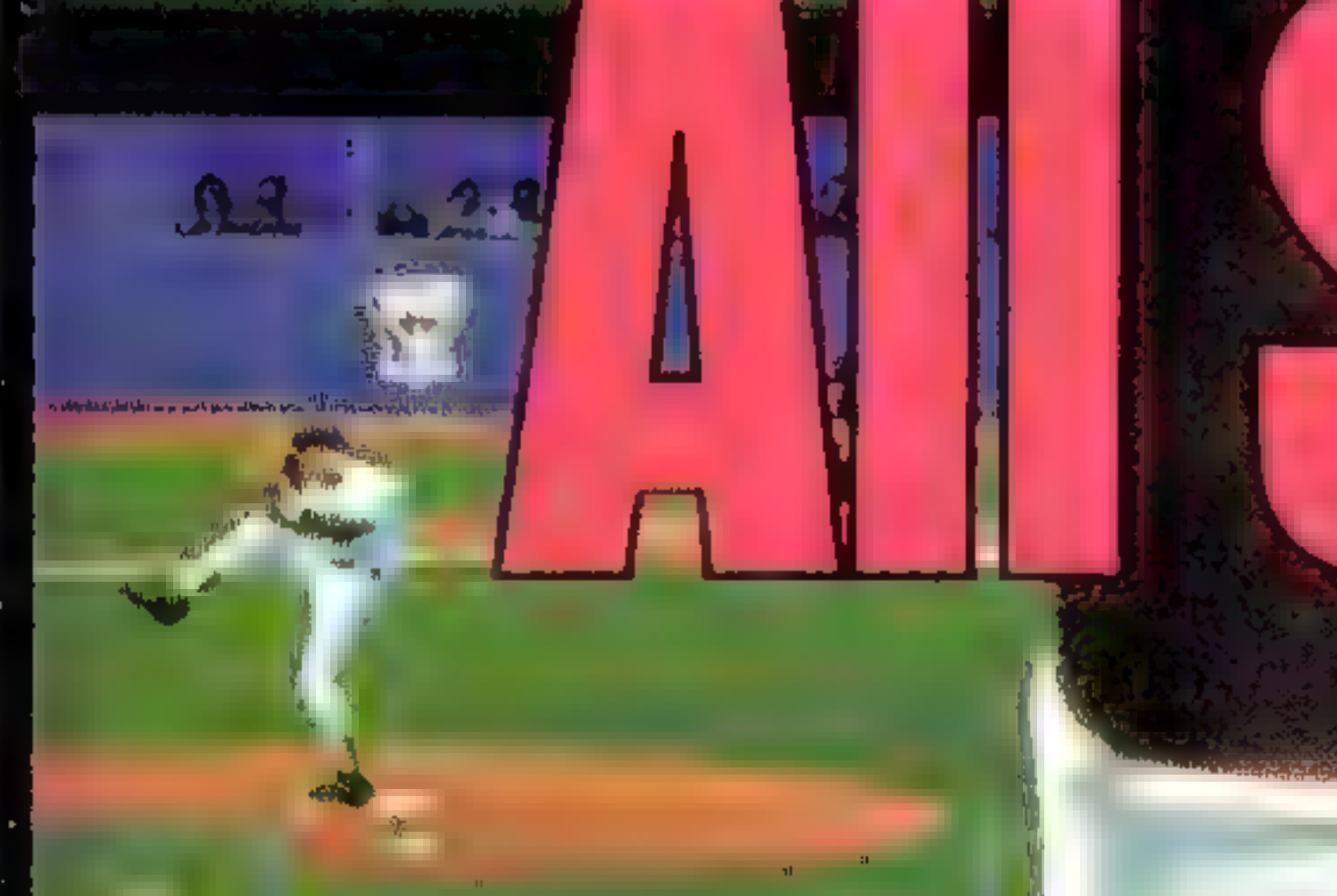
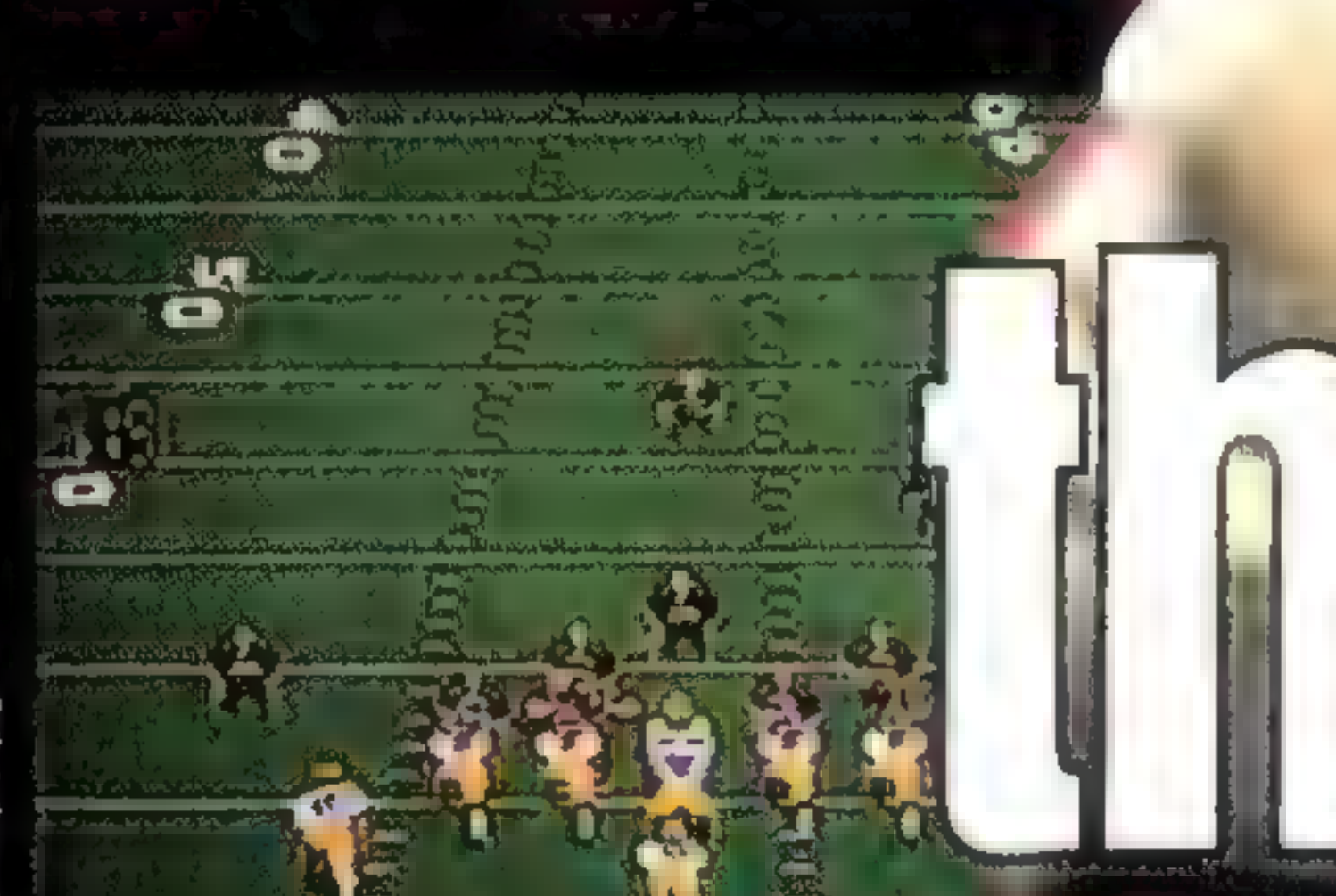
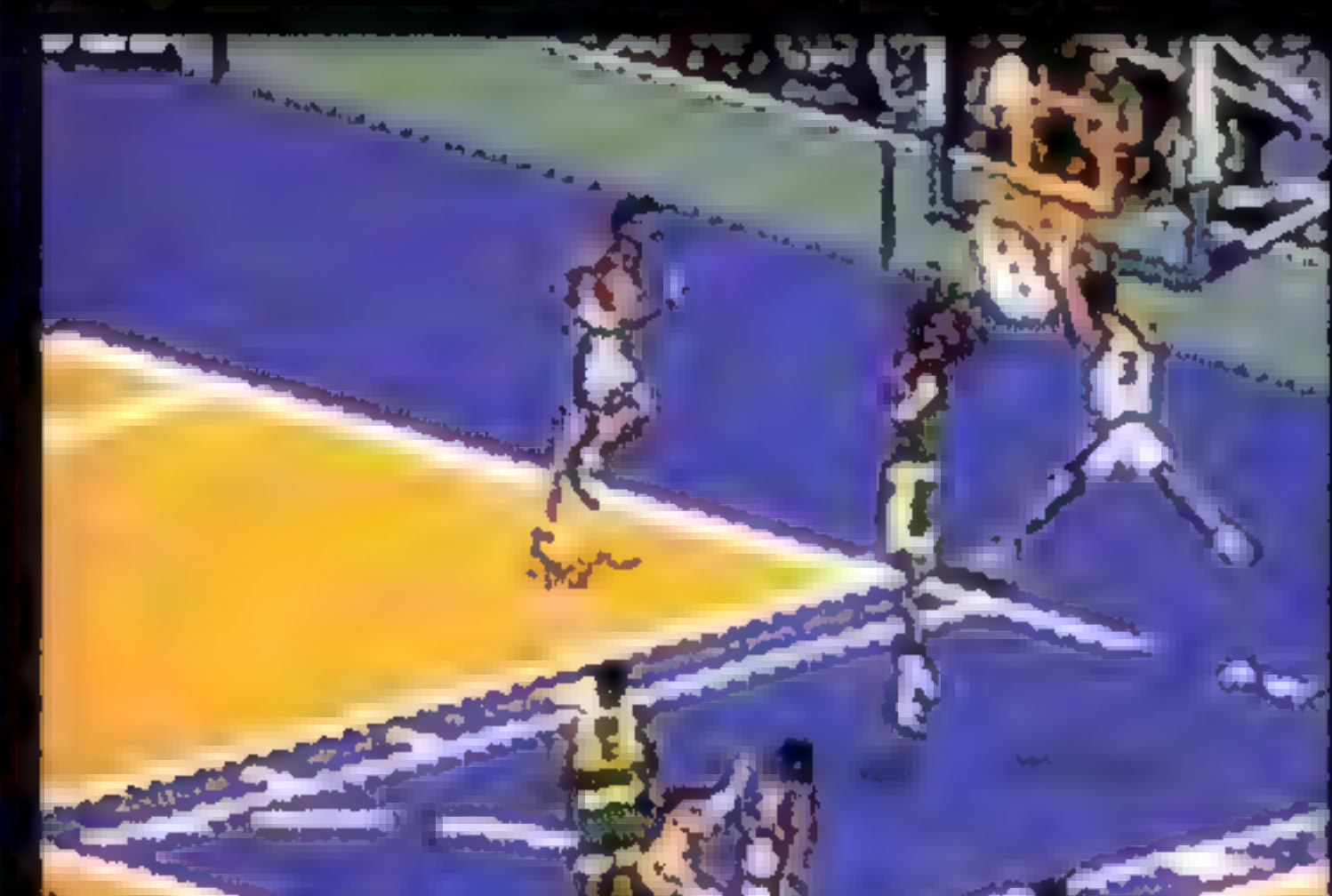
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Zealot

With her new miniseries, **mega-babe** and ruthless WildC.A.T.s assassin **Zealot lets her hair down** and shows off her true roots

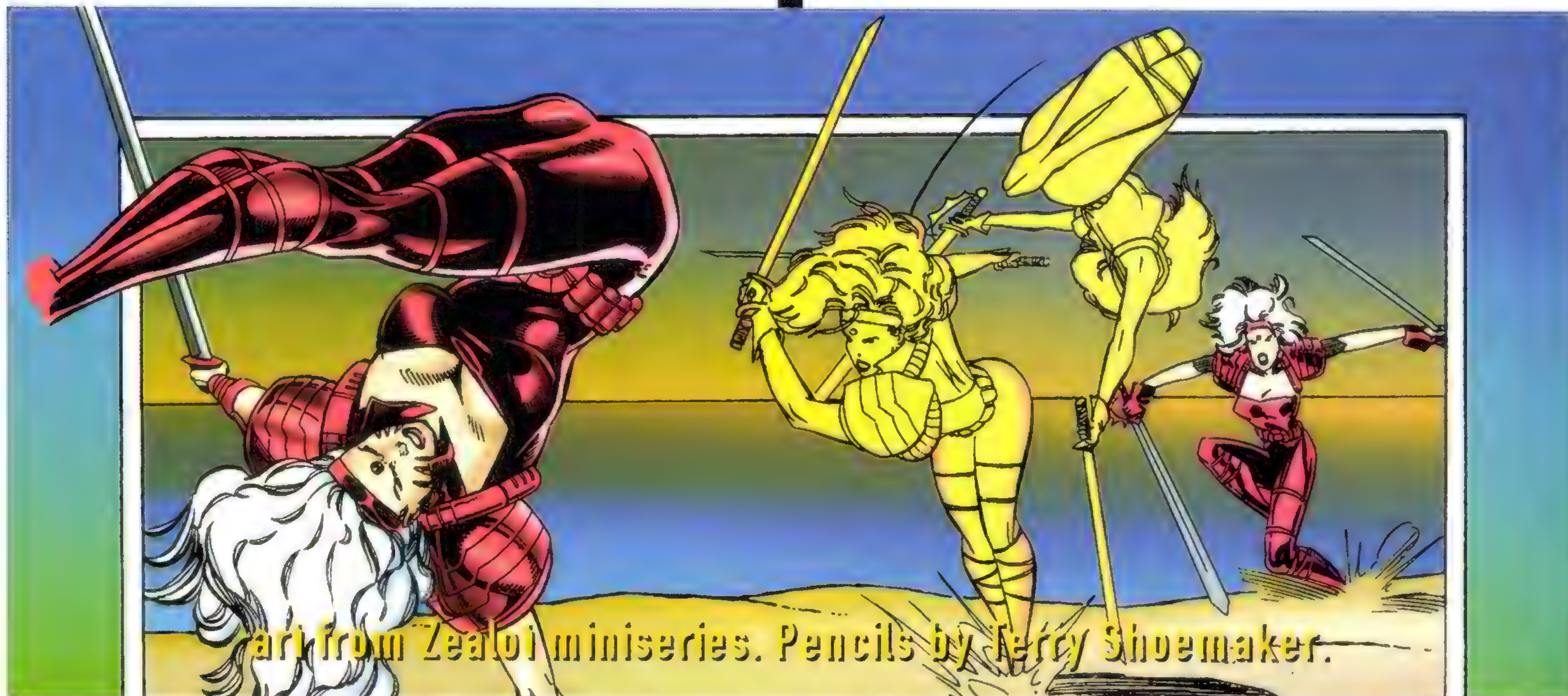
by Anya Martin

Never just another gonzo-breasted comic book babe, Zealot has proven herself time and again to be one of the toughest women in superherodom, building her reputation with the mighty WildC.A.T.s on honor, wisdom—and a very big sword. Now, thanks to a new action-packed, three-part miniseries from WildStorm Productions—simply titled *Zealot*—Zealot fans get to delve into the tall blonde warrior's unique past. While the series, written by Ron [Stormwatch] Marz and penciled by Terry [X-Factor/Stormwatch] Shoemaker, doesn't trace Zealot's roots all the way back to birth, childhood and how she got to earth, issue #1 does explain her ancient Greek past in the Coda sisterhood of assassins. The second issue takes her to medieval Japan

and the third concludes in Nazi Germany just as things are heating up at the start of World War II.

So what is this, some—yawn!—history lesson? Hardly. According to writer Marz, he picked these three time periods because they were rife with conflict, thus ensuring plenty of action and character exploration in the pages of *Zealot*.

"We thought we would start with something that makes sense for readers who are familiar with Zealot's background in ancient Greece," says Marz. "I think the Japan story is a really fantastic-looking issue, and the Third Reich, if nothing else, had great designers—all that soaring sort of architecture. I really tried to pick periods of history that I'd been interested in historically as well as visually. We'll at least be able to use those historical backdrops to give the readers a sense of what it was like



Art from Zealot miniseries. Pencils by Terry Shoemaker.



during those days. It's still very much a superhero-type story, a story in which Zealot would fit naturally because of the fact that her character has developed through the ages. It seemed like a natural."

While Voodoo is the only one of the WildC.A.T.s that makes a brief appearance in the miniseries, readers get to know Zealot's sister, Savante, a lot better and meet an old former friend who is also the main villain in all three time periods. "He's Adonis, the masculine ideal," says Marz. "From his appearance, he's very much the guy that you would think is the square-jawed hero. We based him on the [Greek] sun god, Apollo. Some of the back story of WildC.A.T.s or the Kherubim race was that some of the Greek gods are based on those characters."

While she keeps the same colors and basic design, aspects of Zealot's costume also change with each era, including a samurai-inspired design in the Japan segment. So how does a girl warrior prove her worth in such a guy-dominated comics society? For Zealot, it's no problem.

"I want to portray Zealot as being completely unique, particularly in a male-dominated society like medieval Japan," says Marz. "She's a woman and she's judged in a certain way at first, but I'm very fond of her character and I'd like to use her to show that we often don't really treat or give women the credit that we should. I think the market is ripe for female superheroes right now."

And if there's any superheroine ready to become a modern day role model, it's Zealot. After all, this babe-a-licious warrior was tough enough to be one of the WildC.A.T.s—and Jim Lee's gang ain't never been called no wussies.

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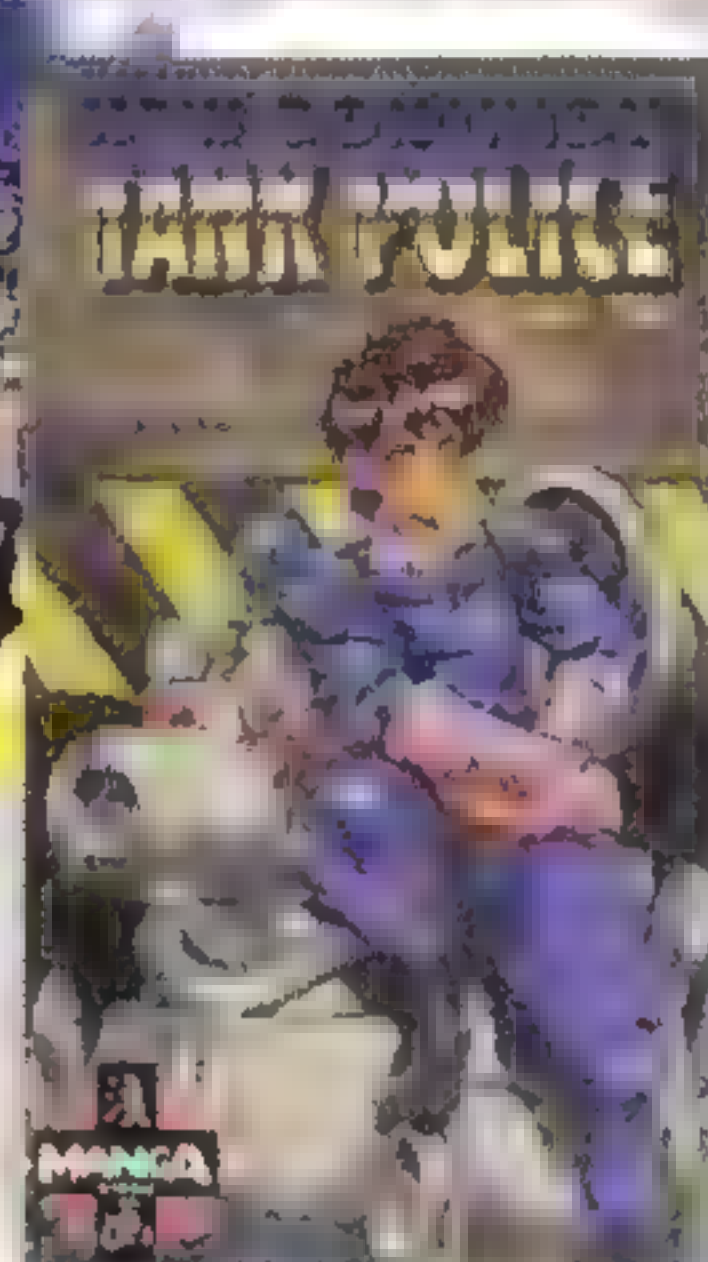
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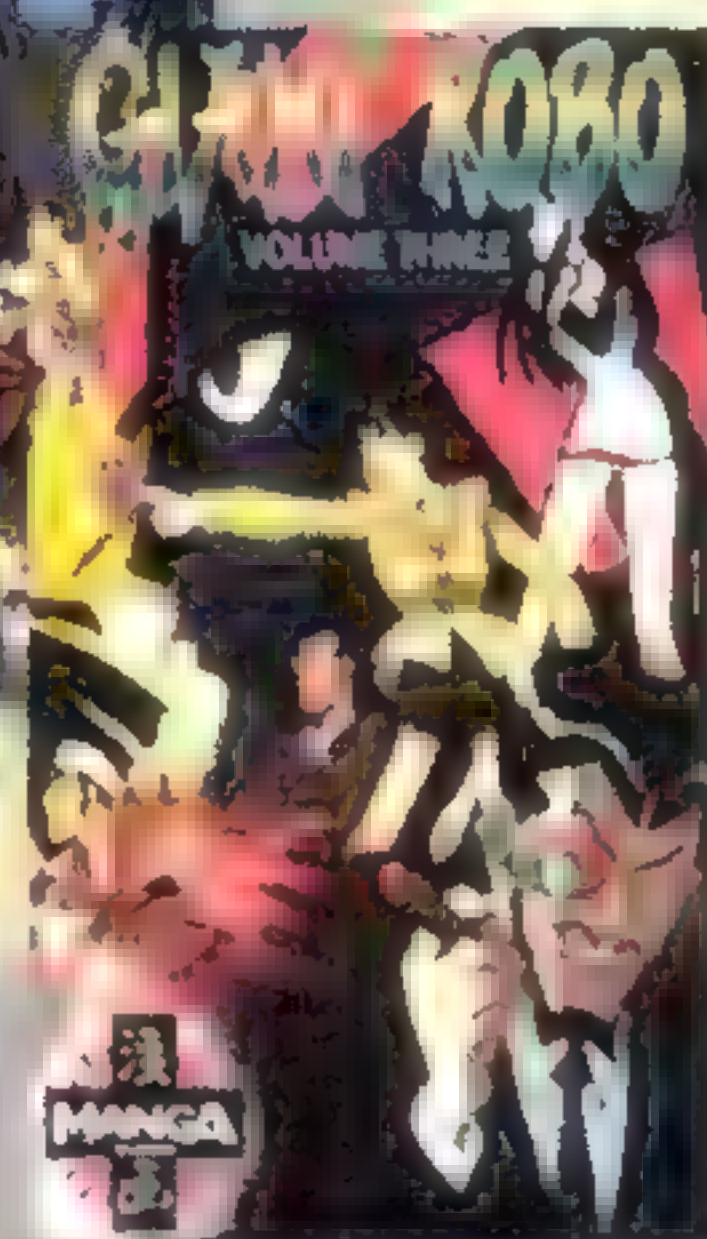
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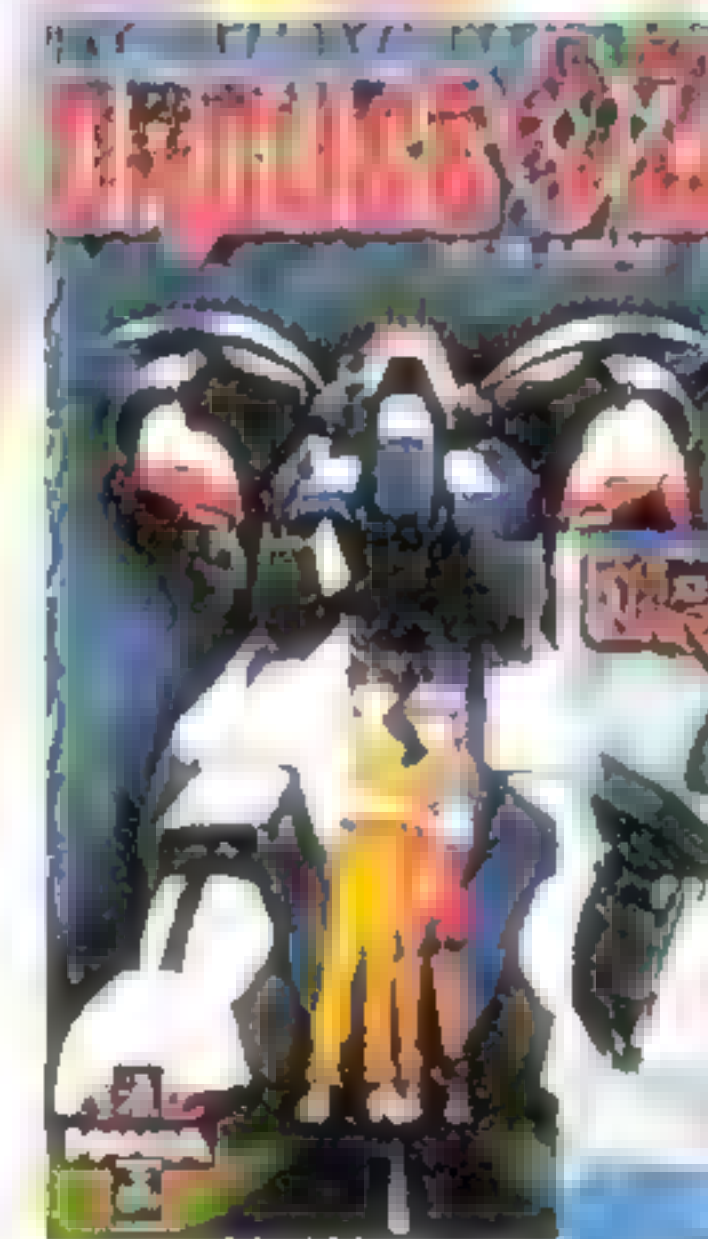
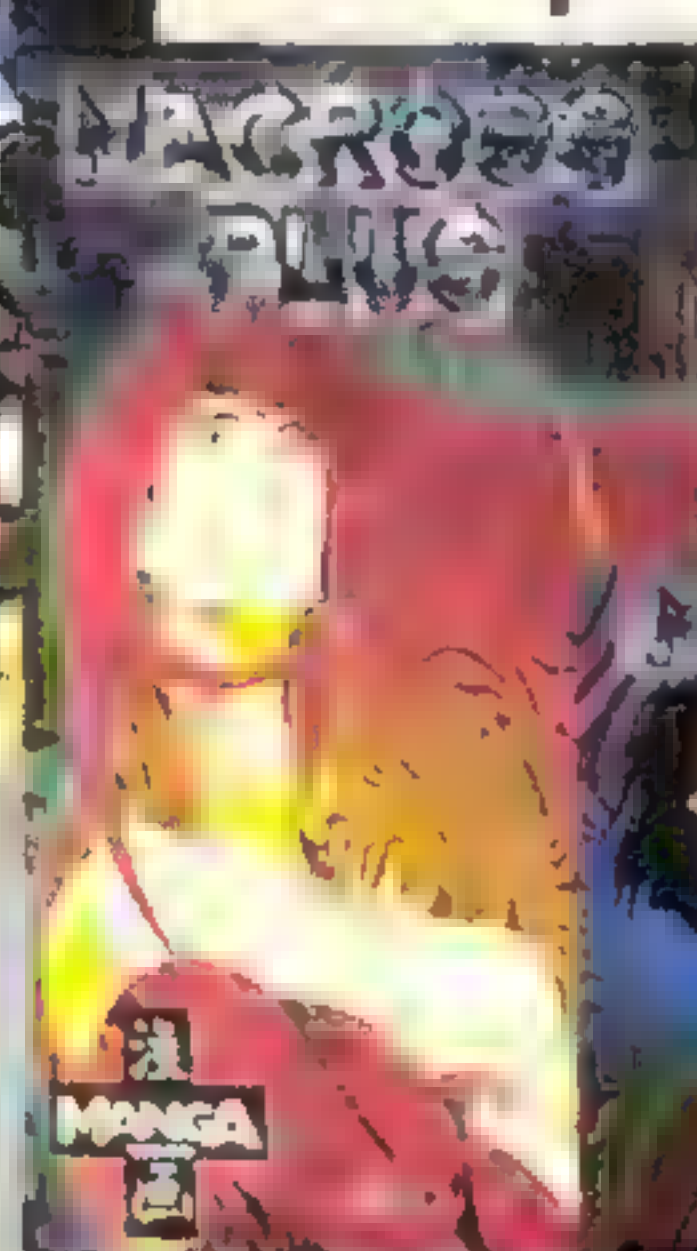
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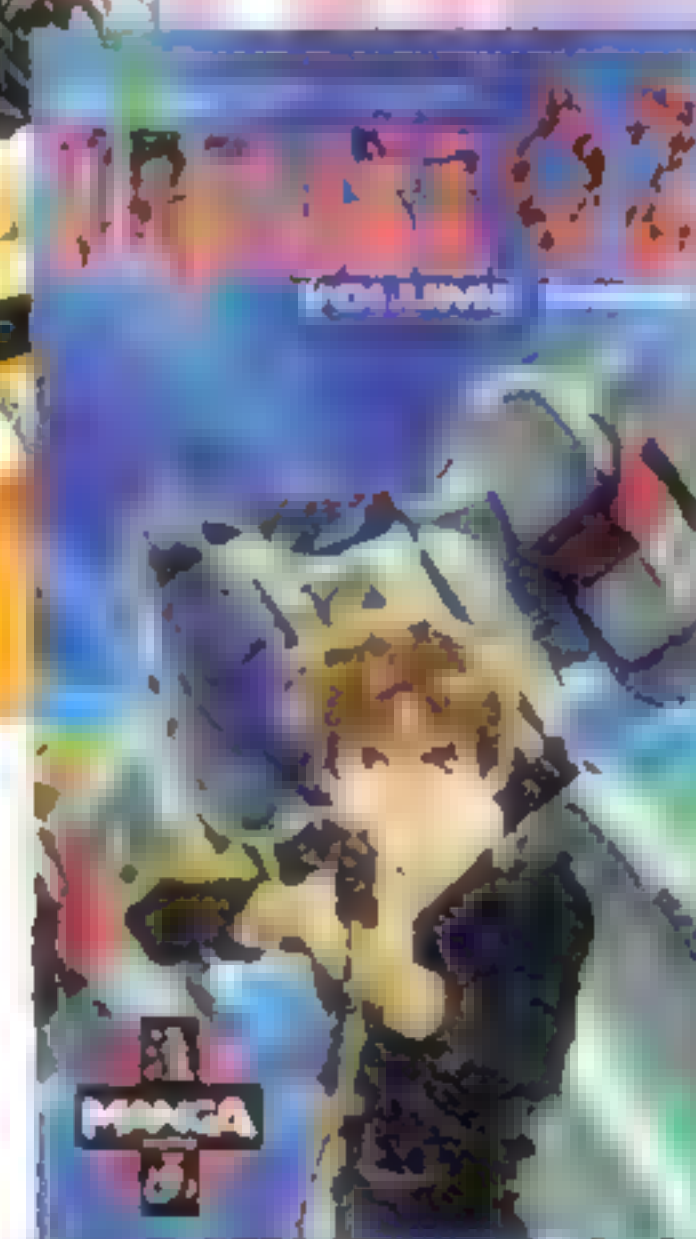
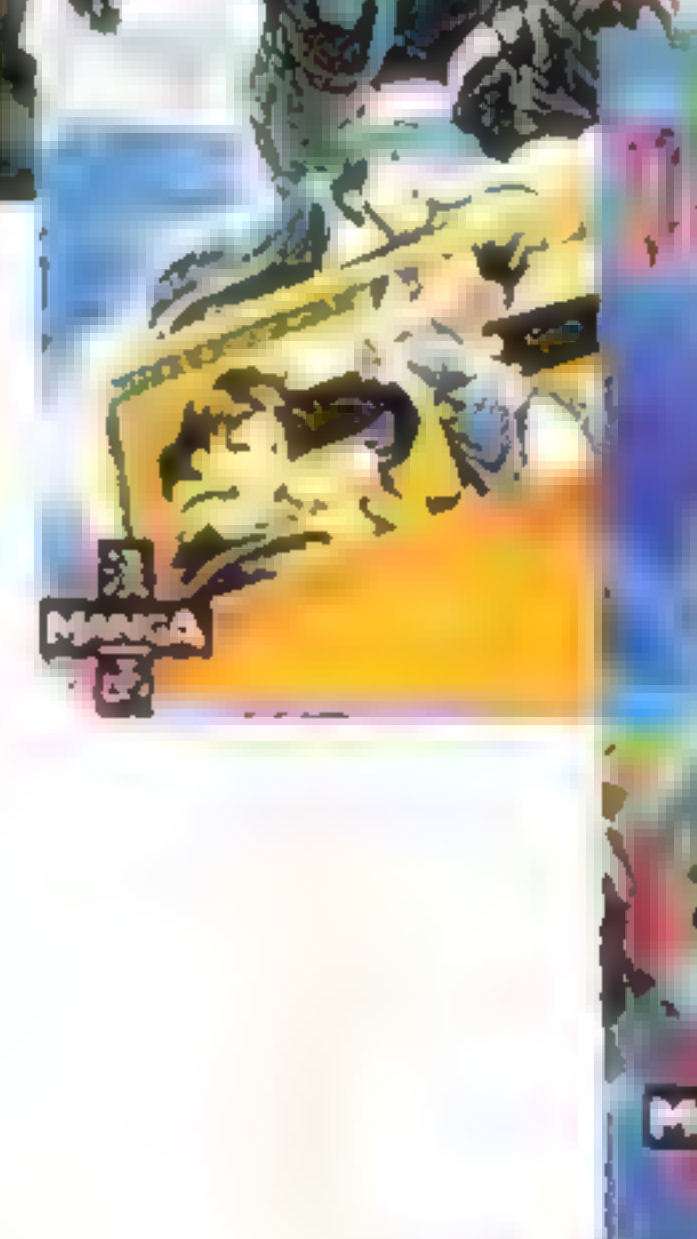
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FLUX exclusive
VAMPIRELLA X-POSED



FLUX DATA SHEET

NAME: Vampirella ♥

BUST: 34C WAIST: 23 HIPS: 34 1/2

HEIGHT: 5' 7" WEIGHT: 114

BIRTH DATE: 2/10 BIRTHPLACE: NYC

TURN-ONS: puppies, red wine, skiing, massages,
my trainers at Equinox Healthclub, biting!

TURN-OFFS: dirty bathrooms, cat hair, mold,
'Body glue' (for my costume!) (i) country music,
smog in NYC.

IDEAL MAN: An ambitious, creative, funny,
caring, crazy, great kisser, with big strong arms
to hold me!

IDEAL WOMAN: Wouldn't you love to know!

AMBITIONS: to win the academy award

WHY I MAKE A GOOD VAMPIRELLA: I look just like her,
and I have a lot of patience!

WHAT I WON'T DO AT COMIC CONVENTIONS: EAT (my stomach
sticks out too much if I do) Jump around (Need I say more?)

STRANGEST REQUEST OF ME FROM A FAN: Some guy asked me to
spank him, then take a topless photo with his
girl friend.

THINGS I LIKE MOST ABOUT BEING VAMPI: Lots of attention
from adoring fans, I get to wear kick ass boots,
cool presents: keychains, toys, art. I get to dance
with Bill Tucci (Shi) and Caesar (Vampi) on breaks,
and not everyone has Topps trading cards with
their photos on them! (i)



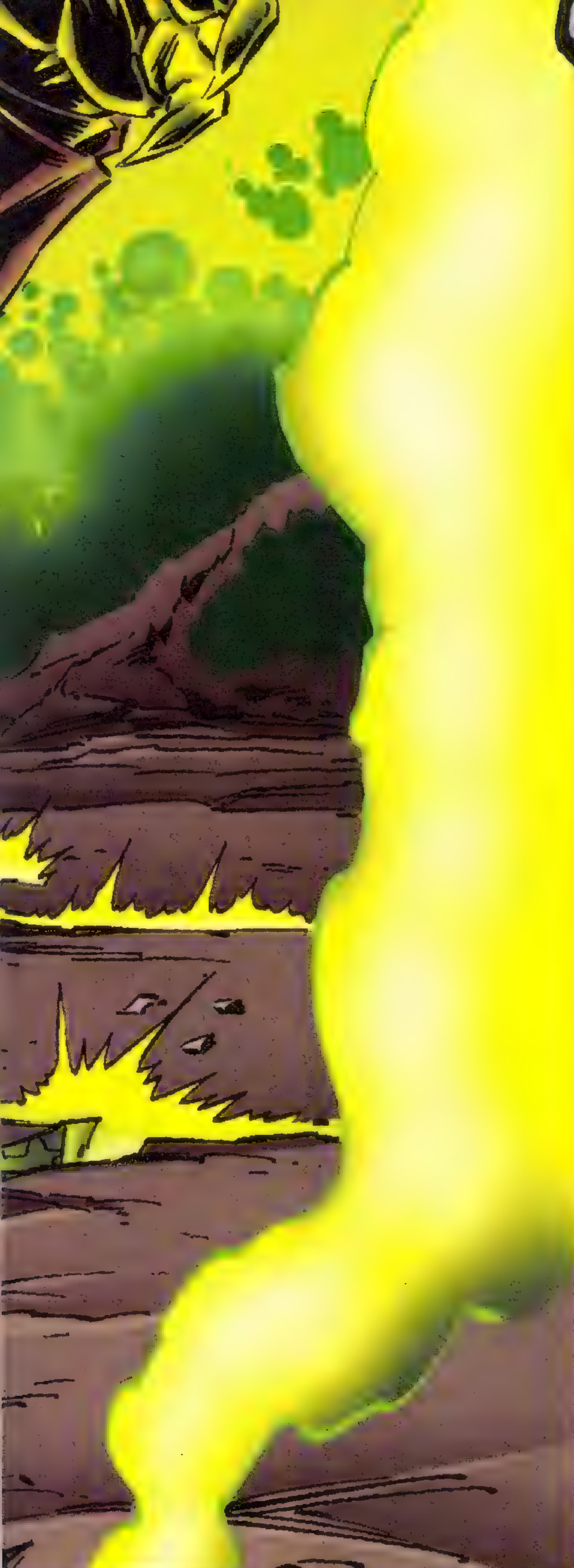
flux 69



SOMETHING'S ROTTEN in DC's bad guy lineage—and with



PORTER
vs
GREEN



BOOOO

by Chris Golden

MARK WAID IS ONE OF THE HOTTEST WRITERS IN COMICS—WHICH ALSO MEANS HE'S ONE OF the busiest. Every month, Waid scripts *Flash* and *Impulse* for DC and *Captain America* and *X-Men* for Marvel. And if his plate wasn't already full enough, Waid will also play a heavy hand in DC's forthcoming effort to revitalize their stable of second-rate villains, a three-issue miniseries called *Underworld Unleashed*.

Waid first came to prominence in the industry with his work on *Flash*, but he'd been hanging around comics for a long time previous to that, first in the fan press in the early Eighties, then later as a staff editor at DC. But, as he's happy to admit, "Everything has come as a consequence of *Flash*. I've been very lucky."

UNDERWORLD UNLEASHED, they attempt to get rid of THE STINK

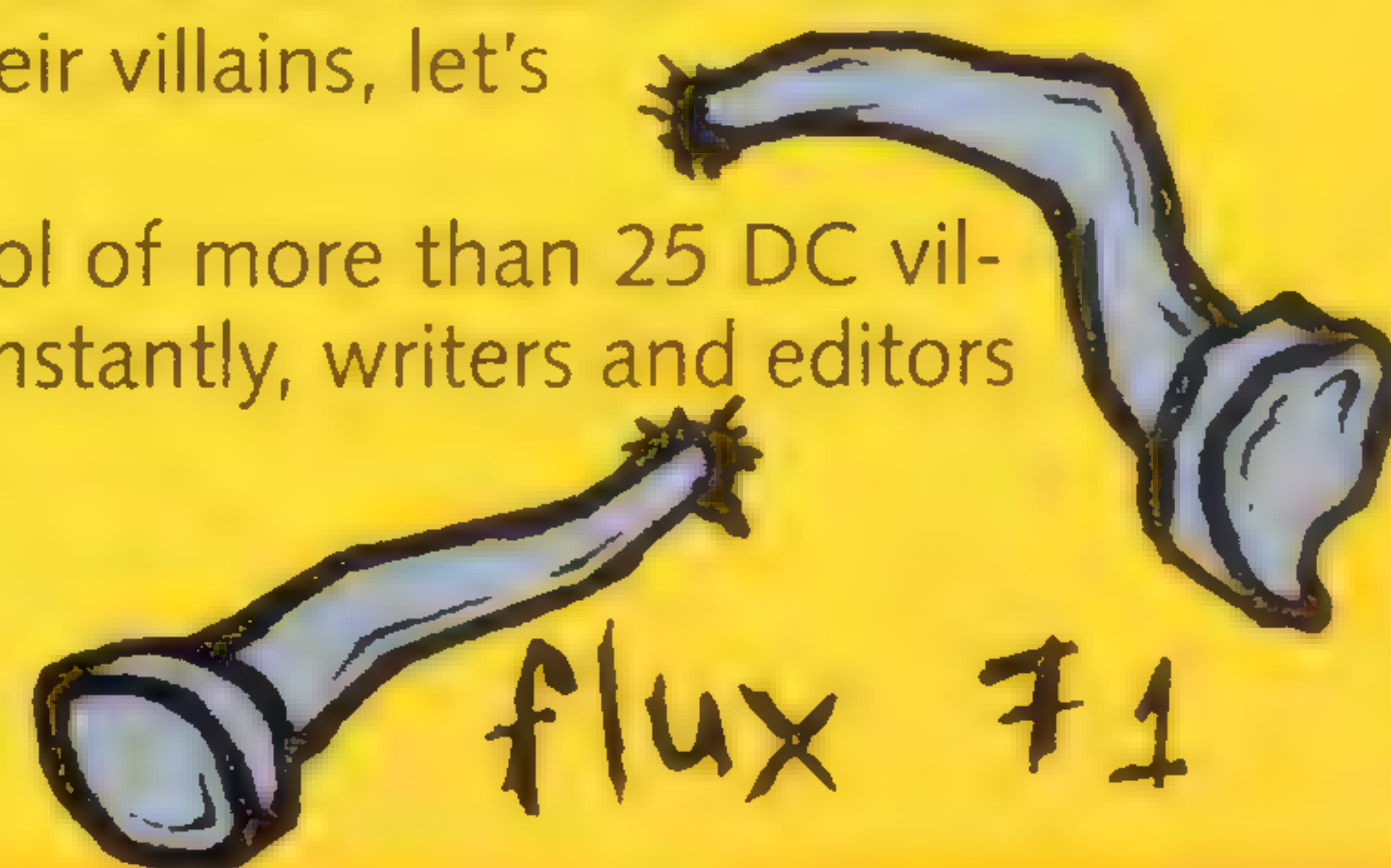


Waid's star status as a writer now wields some serious power, as evidenced by the ballsy way in which he first pitched the concept of *Underworld* to DC. "The idea was to crank up some of the villains of the DC Universe," says Waid. "The problem is that we have six guys who are really cool and a bunch of villains named Captain Boomerang. We've got to drag some of these guys kicking and screaming out of the Sixties. I'm not saying we can fix it all in one giant series, but I do think this is a step in the right direction."

But how does one go into the DC editorial cabal and tell them, in no uncertain terms, that their villains suck?

"It was a very easy sell because everyone knows these villains suck. In no way is this meant to attack DC, but we had a bunch of guys named Clock King, and they needed to be fixed. We have Matter Eater Lad, and Marvel has Galactus—and there-in lies part of the problem. If heroes are defined by their villains, let's crank them up. It was an incredibly easy sell."

Waid's first order of business was to develop a pool of more than 25 DC villains he felt had potential for revamping, and almost instantly, writers and editors were lining up to join the process.



flux 71



"It was a very easy sell because everyone knows these villains suck." —Mark Waid

"It really surprised me that the other writers were playing along so enthusiastically," says Waid. "I worked with them to pump up the villains up and give them new costumes, new powers, new motivations—to make them more 3-dimensional. *Underworld Unleashed* #1 essentially gathers all the wannabes together, pumps them up and sends them off into the world. The villains don't cross back into *Underworld Unleashed* because it's a pretty self-enclosed story. But at the end of issue #1, we just send a bunch of villains cruising the DC Universe.

"Chuck Dixon's using Spellbinder in *Detective*. The guys on *Damage* are revamping Copperhead. *Batman* is using Mr. Freeze. The *Extreme Justice* guys are using Star Sapphire. James Robinson is using Dr. Phosphorus in *Starman*. I took Shadow Thief and Blockbuster for myself, for *Flash* and *Impulse*. I encouraged them all to concentrate on the fact that the villains had to sell their souls to get these powers. So what is the down side? In Blockbuster's case, it's that he really made a shitty deal. He's really big and strong and ugly and stupid, so what does he wish for? To be normal? No, he wishes to be smarter. Now he's smart and ugly. Good plan. That's some of the fun of this stuff, too. And what we have planned for Luthor and Joker is just horrible."

And that, in the end, is what the series is all about. The Devil—or, in this case, a guy named Neron.

"The real focus of *Underworld Unleashed* is Neron—a very charming, all-powerful, incredibly charismatic villain, and his right-hand man, the Trickster," says Waid. "Most of *Underworld Unleashed* is told from the Trickster's point of view. He has spent most of his adult life taking the easy path and being a goof. As he gets older, he realizes it's time to make one giant score. He's the ultimate con man, but he's got nothing to show for it.

"So he links up with Neron and very quickly learns that he is in way over his head. It's easy for him to say that he wants to be as powerful as Neron, but when he walks in and sees the inner circle of Joker, Luthor, Circe, Cadaver and Doctor Polaris eating babies or whatever, he's like, 'Oh God!' It's as much the Trickster's story as anything else. Superheroes don't appear but for a page and a half in issue one, two pages in issue two, and the climax of issue three. It's essentially a story about the villains."

Another groundbreaking miniseries Waid is doing for DC is *Kingdom Come*, which will be painted by Alex Ross of *Marvel's* fame. Due in the first quarter of 1996, it concerns what Waid calls "The last case of the super heroes. It's off of Alex Ross' original idea, which was, it's 20 years later, the world has been taken over by Image Comics and we have to fix it. And I was able to build a story around that.

"It's the final adventure of Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Flash and Green Lantern and all those guys," Waid

continues. "The old guard heroes have retired and handed the world over to the next generation. Unfortunately, the next generation turn out to be a bunch of Image superheroes and they spend all their time throwing buses at each other. These guys aren't heroes at all. They don't give a crap if buildings collapse in the middle of their fights...just like the Image Universe. Eventually, something happens which is a wakeup call for Superman, telling him to get his ass off that farm and come back and fix the world."

Mark Waid has been working on a lot of comics legends lately, but one in particular posed a huge question: after all these years, what in the world do you do with Captain America?

"Mark Gruenwald left me with a dead man in armor," says Waid. "So I had to kind of get away from there. Issue #444

doesn't have Cap in it. It's the Avengers dealing with a hostage crisis that just cries out for Captain America, but he's not there. It ends with a shot of Cap on a slab, frozen in a block of ice, somewhere.

"The first real story arc, more a prologue, is called 'Operation: Rebirth,' which goes from #445 to #448. It's a Cap/Red Skull story, but I can guarantee it's unlike anything we've ever done with him before because it's a buddy picture. Here are two guys who absolutely do not trust each other, who are thrown together by circumstances that are even bigger than them."

So how will they make Captain America cool again?

"The first thing we have to address is the fact that everybody thinks he's 40 years old, which he's not. He's probably not even out of his twenties, if you really logic Marvel time out. By now, Cap is about 85% instinct. He's always three steps ahead of you, and if I do my job right, I want to continue to surprise readers with the way Cap acts. I think I can give him an edge without making him a jerk, without making him arrogant, without making him brutal."

Back on *Flash*, Waid is doing a sequel to the "Terminal Velocity" story arc called "Dead Heat." Extending through *Flash* 108-111 and *Impulse* 10 and 11, Waid explains that it is the story of "the guy who was supposed to have been the Flash between Jay Garrick and Barry Allen.

"He was tapped by the Speed Force, but decided to take his own black and twisted path down it. He is every bit as fast as Wally, but he's been living clandestinely for years. He's had a lot more time to train and practice in terms of the tricks of speed. He can do stuff that Wally never dreamed he would be able to do, which makes him a really formidable opponent. It's going to be a real wakeup call for Wally to fight him and think, 'You know, I could do that too if I could figure out how, but I'm too busy trying not to get killed.'"

When you think about it, Waid must really identify with Flash. He'll need a little help from the Speed Force to get all these projects in under his deadlines.



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Corporate Killer

Rick Veitch takes a bite out of capitalism with Neil Gaiman's Teknophage

by Chris Golden



Rick Veitch may have made his name on *Swamp Thing* and the truly demented *Brat Pack*, but lately, all talk's been about Neil Gaiman's *Teknophage*, the grimmest work to come out of Tekno Comix so far, and all from the pen of Mr. Veitch.

The comic's title refers to "the Phage," a huge humanoid dinosaur who has become an inter-dimensional tyrant. Billions, abducted from thousands of worlds, live in fear of his attentions. And inside the Phage building, the monster's mobile headquarters, is corporate hell.

"The Phage is a living metaphor for the horrors of capitalism," says Veitch. "He is the ultimate evil boss. So evil that he actually devours the people he works for, or works them to death, or sucks their souls out to run his machinery. He's the last of his kind, but only because he ate all the other ones."

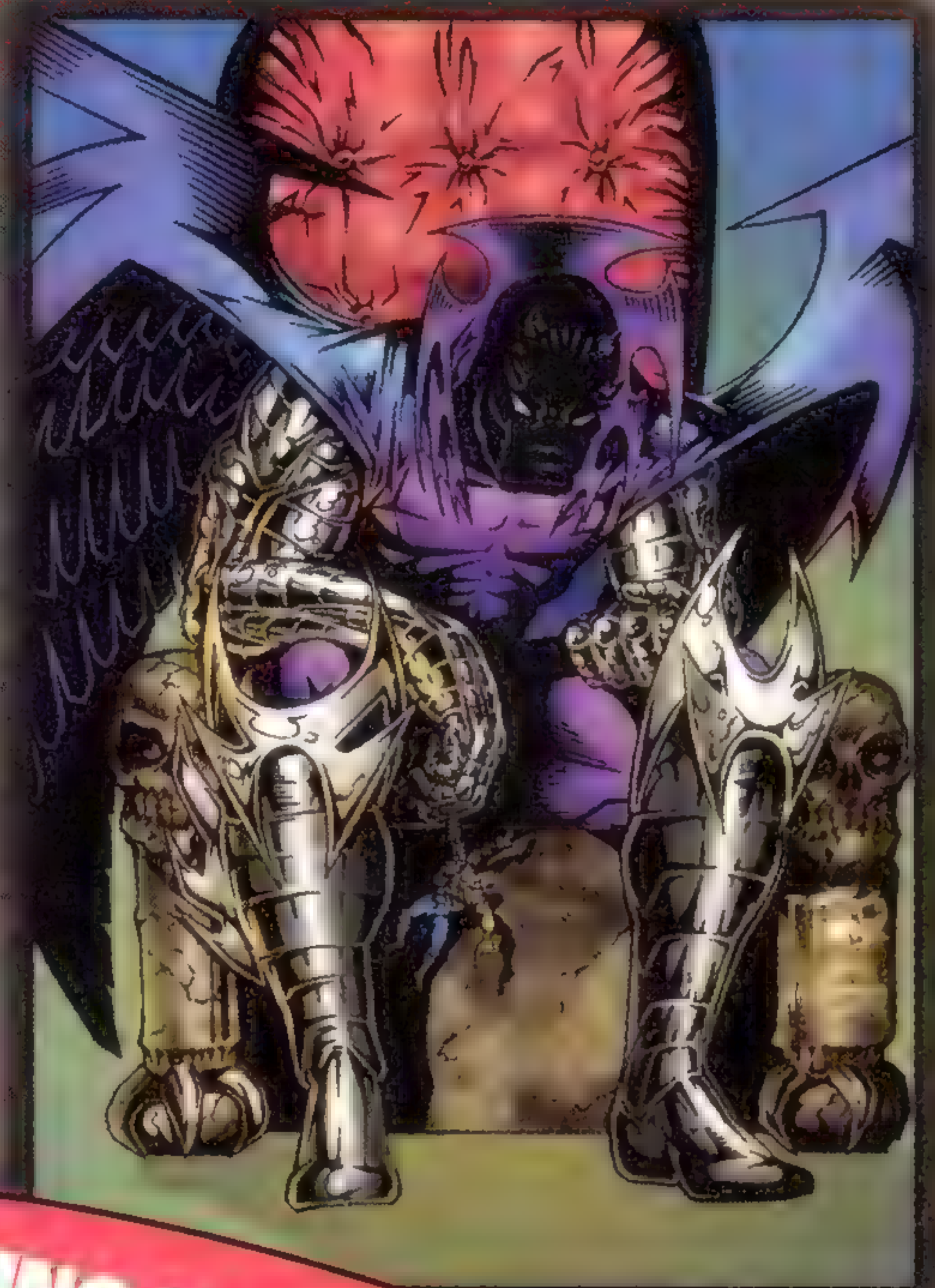
Veitch enjoys working with Neil Gaiman, referring to the great *Sandman* writer as "an incredibly creative human being." Strangely enough, Veitch actually dreamed that he and Neil would be working together on a technological horror creation, long before he had ever heard of *Teknophage*. Considering that Gaiman made his name on *Sandman*, and Veitch's self-published comic, *Rare Bit Fiends*, is his dream diary in comic book form, their union seems wholly appropriate.

"Dreams are a sixth sense that we all have," says Veitch, "All we have to do is pay attention to them and learn the language they speak, and they can tell us these kinds of things all the time."

On the other hand, Veitch might not have believed it if he had dreamed he'd be writing a book for Image—and yet that's exactly what's happening.

"Extreme Studios wanted me to write a book and I said, 'Give me the lamest book you've got, but let me do anything I want.' I'm going to be doing *Bloodstrike*, but I'm not going to dumb it down. I'm going to write the best goddamn superhero book I can."

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continued
from pg 58

[laughs]

FLUX: Has that made you reconsider anything?

GROENING: Well, I make sure that we have enough butt jokes in the show to keep them happy.

FLUX: Let's talk about your *Life In Hell* comic strip. Point blank: are Akbar and Jeff gay?

GROENING: Here's my standard reply: Akbar and Jeff are either brothers or lovers—or both. Whatever offends you most, that's what they are. [pause] Yeah, of course they're gay! Big commercial mistake on my part, by the way. A big brewery approached me wanting to have Akbar and Jeff promote their beer. We were talking about an Akbar and Jeff spring break train, Akbar and Jeff tattoos, an Akbar and Jeff blimp. [laughs] We were talking about it very seriously until they read an article on me in *Rolling Stone* and found out that Akbar and Jeff had an alternate lifestyle.

FLUX: Were you all set to do it?

GROENING: The deal is: Akbar and Jeff will endorse anything. The other *Life In Hell* characters—Binky, Bongo, Sheba, etc.—will never do an endorsement, but Akbar and Jeff will endorse anything.

FLUX: Has the response to *Life In Hell* changed a lot with the success of *The Simpsons*?

GROENING: Being on TV has made the comic strip safe enough for a number of newspapers to print. Because I am an endorsed commodity, some of the weirder stuff I do is acceptable. I don't think I've toned the strip down at all, other than no longer using profanity. I had to do that if I wanted to have it printed in daily papers.

FLUX: Is it harder for you to focus on the strip now that you have a successful TV show and are no longer a starving artist?

GROENING: It's pretty hard to fake the starving artist mentality convincingly these days, although plenty of rock stars do it. The strip has basically been an ongoing journal of the things which preoccupy me. In my bachelor days I did lots of strips about struggling with relationships, and these days I do strips about kids.

FLUX: Did you grow up reading comics?

MATT GROENING: Sure. I've been looking at comics since before I could read. I had an older brother, Mark—who by the way is the actual inspiration for Bart, though I've never admitted that before—who turned me onto all the great comics of the fifties: *Mad*, when it was still a comic, *Donald Duck*, *Uncle Scrooge*, *Little Lulu*, *Tales From The Crypt*—all that stuff.

He and his buddies had a secret clubhouse up in this little room in a garage down the street and you had to climb a ladder and crawl across a beam in order to get in there. That was the comics reading room, so there was definitely a taste of the forbidden just getting to this secret room to read the comics. They wouldn't let me in while they were there so I had to wait until they were out shooting slingshots at squirrels until I could sneak in and read all these great comics.

FLUX: And that would seem to have inspired Bart's treehouse, where he and his friends always go to read their comics.

GROENING: Yes, exactly. Comics are meant to be read in one of two places: either in a tree house or under the covers late at night with a flashlight in your mouth. And in my case, it was a flashlight in the mouth and a little transistor radio with one of those little plastic earphones. My brother had a rocket-shaped transistor radio and the little antenna thing which came out of the nose was the antenna. It was ridiculous.

FLUX: When did you get the idea to form your own comic book company?

GROENING: Well, my entire grown-up career is based on the lingering fantasies I had as a kid. When I was a kid I had a little club that was devoted to the worship of monsters and it always

seemed to me that the greatest job in the world would be to publish monster magazines and comics just like the big boys did. And then I lucked into having this hit show on TV which has allowed all this other cool stuff to take place.

FLUX: Did you ever think of having a huge company like Marvel or DC do *Simpsons* comics?

GROENING: Yeah, sure. We talked to the big guys, but it just seemed like it would be more fun to do it ourselves.

FLUX: Compared to the other comic book companies, what kind of company do you want Bongo to be?

GROENING: I'm trying to bring humor into the fairly grim comic book market. I'm not a big fan of solemnity and I wanted to inject a little humor for kids into the market. There's plenty of great, very funny stuff being done for immature adults, but there's nothing smart and funny for kids out there.

FLUX: What's the idea behind Zongo, your other comic book company?

GROENING: Everything we publish in Bongo is kid-friendly. Zongo will be more mature stuff. I don't know if it really matters, but I just want to give people the opportunity to make a choice. I can understand given the following we have with Bongo and the intensity of some of the fans that some people will buy anything with the name on it and I don't want a little kid to pick up an underground-type comic that we publish and be warped for life. Although it happened to me [laughs]...and I turned out okay. To warp and entertain, that's my motto.

FLUX: What's new with Bongo?

GROENING: We've got this *Treehouse Of Horror* comic book coming out which is going to be an annual just like our annual "Treehouse Of Horrors" episode on TV. We try to remain consistent with the *Simpsons* universe, but the stories are all original; the comic books are for people who can't get enough of the show. Mike Allred's comic is called "Little Shop Of Homers." You can guess what that is. Jeff Smith has a *Moby Dick*-ish tale entitled "Call Me Homer." James Robinson has "Invasion Of The Bart People," a *Cat People*-like story.

FLUX: How was it working with Jeff Smith, James Robinson and Mike Allred?

GROENING: It's amazing that they agreed to do it. These guys are busy little beavers with their own empires to build. But they're just fans of *The Simpsons*. It's always been my hope that we can open the doors wide and see what other crackpots we come up with.

FLUX: Do the artists do their own interpretations of the Simpsons?

GROENING: No, we've experimented with that, and we like the original recipe better—so everything is consistent with *The Simpsons* universe.

FLUX: Will Lisa Comics and Krusty Comics also be ongoing?

GROENING: There's a second Lisa coming soon and we're working on another Krusty. Also, our Zongo imprint has just put out its first title, *Jimbo*, by the legendary Gary Panter. His first four issues are done, and we're talking with a bunch of other cartoonists. We're going to expand that line shortly.

FLUX: Do you find a lot of good stuff that way?

GROENING: A little good stuff. Some terrible stuff and lots of stuff that just misses. But I also come across a few gems. But some of what's going on in comics now is so exciting. Chris Ware does this really great book called *Jimmy Corrigan—The Smartest Boy On Earth* (Fantagraphics). Stupendous art. Then there's Peter Bagge's *Hate* and Daniel Clowes' *Eightball*.

FLUX: One final question: Has there ever been serious consideration given to a *Simpsons* movie?

GROENING: There has been, but I doubt it will happen. I would love it. I'm ready to do it any time but no one can agree on how to divide up the obscene profits so there won't be any profits. [laughs] I try to use the greed, stupidity, ego and avarice that I have to deal with as an inspiration in my work. I'm just amazed that people are willing to annoy cartoonists who have the ultimate revenge sitting ready to go on their drawing board. Believe me, I've got a very good memory and all this stuff will come out in some form some day.



ANIMEEYE

by Jeff Yang

OKAY, EVERYONE WHO DOESN'T KNOW WHAT anime is, please raise your hand. Thank you. Please hand this magazine back to the cool friend you borrowed it from and turn on the TV, because it's almost time for something wholesome and educational, like *Fraggle Rock*. Sorry, did that sound sarcastic? Contemptuous? That's because, if you weren't paying attention, anime—Japanese animation—is here, and it's huge, and if you have no idea what it is, you probably suck. Anime is everywhere. Parents and educators find anime disturbing because they have the weird delusion that it's violent, obscene, and not suitable for kids under the age of, say, 35. Just remember: they said the same thing about comics, heavy metal, *Mortal Kombat* and the Internet.

GIANT ROBO

(Manga Video, dubbed)

Giant Robo is an epic boy-and-his-giant-robot tale set in a world just like ours, only with giant robots in it. The Shizuma Drive—a clean, powerful, and inexhaustible energy supply—has brought peace to the world; hunger, poverty, and other ills are almost unknown. Evil, on the other hand, is still on the loose—in the form of Big Fire, a criminal terrorist organization dedicated to the overthrow of the world. Earth's only defense: the Experts of Justice, a group of heroes with special powers, whose mightiest weapon is the boy Daisuke and the giant robot known only as—you guessed it!—Giant Robo. Truly a breathtaking production, with beautiful, retro-deco design reminiscent of *Batman: The Animated Series*, and a symphonic orchestral score.

ANIMATION: Unforgettable

OVERALL: Must see

TENCHI MUYO: NO NEED FOR TENCHI!

(Pioneer LDC, subtitled)

This series, about a hapless teenage boy afflicted with not one, but five gorgeous babes from outer space, has become a

hard-core hands-down favorite among fans on both sides of the Pacific. They ain't dumb: *Tenchi* is easily one of the most clever and side-splittingly hilarious series available today. Episode 7 in the series, *The Night Before The Carnival*, features Ryoko and Aeka both making bumbling attempts to seduce Tenchi—using girly romance comics as their guidebooks. Not to be missed.

ANIMATION: Gorgeous and unique

OVERALL: Must see, again and again

FATAL FURY 2

(Viz Video, dubbed)

The second in a series of animated adaptations of the *Fatal Fury* arcade quarter-

down-on-his-luck brawler regains will to fight through the efforts of a plucky waif—is also a mild improvement on *Fatal Fury 1*, which had no plot whatsoever. The vid's cover hypes it like an adrenaline junkie's John Woo-meets-Bruce Lee dream; anyone expecting more than some moderately exciting boot-to-the-head will likely be disappointed.

ANIMATION: Good

OVERALL: Kinda sucks

LA BLUE GIRL

(Anime 18/CPM, subtitled)

As the story begins, 18-year-old Miko Mido—the last of the Mido clan—is warned of the hatred of the Suzuka and

the evil of the Shikima. But before Miko's grandmother can pass the signet down to her chosen heir, the Suzuka attack, stealing it for themselves. Welcome to the jungle, Miko baby. As the Shikima move in for revenge, the plot degenerates into a typically sickoid series of Miko-meets-tentacle scenes. For variety, there's Miko's adopted sister Miyu, who hits the nasty end of a few writhing demon thingies too. Sadly, an annoying comic-relief midget named Nin-Nin does not get nailed.

ANIMATION: Mediocre

OVERALL: Sucks. Literally.

DEVIL HUNTER YOHKO 5: HELL ON EARTH

(A.D. Vision, subtitled)

Proof that not all sexy supernatural-critter vids are for the raincoat-and-rubber-underwear crowd, the *Devil Hunter Yohko* series features Yohko Mano, a cute amateur ghoulbuster with a ridiculous double-doughnut hairdo. The 108th woman of the Mano line to be trained to fight underworld uglies, Yohko's only desire is to lead a normal high-

school gal's life. Unfortunately, things (mostly things with horns, tentacles, and nasty dispositions) keep on getting in the way, forcing poor Yohko to kill them. Episode 5 of the series has it all: mad violence, creepy effects, and a girl with really big hair.

ANIMATION: Good

OVERALL: Worth Watching



Giant Robo Vol. 1 (Manga Video)

muncher, this *Rocky*-esque retread brings back Terry Hungry Wolf Bogard, his brother Andy, and friends Joe Higashi and Mai Shiranui for another dose of high-kicking, butt-stompin', street-fight-in' action. So is it worth watching? Uh...depends. Since it's animated, most of *FF*'s fighting action translates pretty well; *Fatal Fury 2*'s ripoff storyline—

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SECOND COMING

FLUX's guide to the next generation of collectible trading card games

by Steve Fritz

When most people think of trading card games, they immediately think *Magic: The Gathering*. But while *Wizards Of The Coast's* incredibly successful card game is certainly the genre's heavy hitter, the truth is that by year's end, there will be over 75 different collectible card games on store shelves. Here's a roundup of some to watch for:

CHRYSalIS: BORNE OF THE SUPERNATURE

(Comico)

One of four comic book-based card games on the way, *Chrysalis* takes its cues from the recently back-from-the-dead Comico Comics company. The game offers a killer line-up of great artists, including Simon Bisley, Jill Thompson, Walt Simonson and Dave Gibbons, guaranteeing a spectacular look. As for the concept of the game, your body is Chrysalis and your powers have just been unleashed—and what powers they are depends on the cards in your hand.

THE CROW

(Heartbreaker Hobbies)

Heartbreaker's *DoomTrooper* card set had some very cool art, and *The Crow*,



their second, continues in that tradition. When they aren't pulling stills from the popular Brandon Lee action film, they're using horrific images from original *Crow* comic book artist Jay O'Barr. In the game, angels and devils are out to save/damn bystanders' souls, all while the Crow runs around scoring vengeance points. Better enjoy this one before the sequel to *The Crow* comes out starring Jon Bon Jovi!

ECHELON OF FIRE/FURY

(Medallion Games)

The second war-oriented card game after Columbia's *Dixie*, *Echelon Of Fire/Fury* gives gamers the option of it taking place in either World War II or the present day. A very good game with cool looking cards that seems to be catching on with the war gamers.

GUARDIANS

(FPG)

Fantasy artist Keith Parkinson and his FPG cohorts have gotten together to create their own card game. *Guardians* bears a resemblance to TSR's *BloodWars* in that your creatures battle your opponent's for possession of various lands—but the art in *Guardians* blows away *BloodWars*. *Guardians* also offers a pretty warped sense of humor: one way to stop the nasties from killing your creatures is to bribe them—and wait 'til you

HYBORIAN GATES (Cardz)



TOWERS IN TIME (Thunder Castle)



RAGE (White Wolf)



WILDSTORMS (Wildstorm)



see just what it takes to bribe the Beauty Queen!

HERESY: KINGDOM COME (Last Unicorn)

For those looking for a more advanced and inventive card game, Last Unicorn's *Heresy: Kingdom Come* may be the ticket. The basic plot involves Armageddon being triggered through the fall of what will be the future version of the Internet, the Matrix. Your job is to round up enough demons, wizards, angels, cyberjocks and mercs to stake out your own little bit of heaven in cyberspace. These oversized cards also feature some nifty art.

HIGHLANDER (Thunder Castle)

One of the most anticipated card games of the year. Based on the popular TV and movie series, the *Highlander* card game lets players lead Duncan MacLeod and his immortal buds against other immortals in an effort to gain the Prize. The game's main focus is on swordplay, which isn't surprising given Thunder Castle's *Swordplay* role playing game.

HYBORIAN GATES (Cardz, Inc.)

In *Hyborian Gates*, you lead trans-dimensional shock troops and incredibly large cats throughout the metaverse with only one intention: conquest. Once you get used to the game mechanics, *Hyborian Gates* is quite a challenge. But even if you don't, the awesome art from Julie Bell and Boris Valejo should keep you busy.

MARVEL OVERPOWER (Fleer)

The first card game to take place within the Marvel Comics Universe, Fleer's *Marvel OverPower* simulates combat among the various super heroes and lets you set your Marvel heroes and villains out on missions—and the first player to

complete his seven-card Mission wins. Starter decks include *X-Men* ("Mutants Unite" and "Sworn To Protect"), *Marvel Universe* ("Heroes Assemble" and "Clobberin' Time") and *Super Villain* ("Deadly Foes" and "Lethal Allies").

RAGE (White Wolf)

This game started off with a bang, but seems to be cooling off lately. The art ranges from incredible to terrible, depending on the individual card. And it can be a real bitch to complete the set. The game features packs of werewolves hunting each other down while demonic creatures go for both wolf packs.

SHADOWFIST (Deadalas Games)

This martial arts card game focuses heavily on Chinese mythology, occultism and mystic arts, but still offers plenty of beat-'em-up action for those with iron fists. The cards themselves look pretty good, and it'll be interesting to see how *Shadowfist* holds up against the *Ultimate Combat* game.

SIM CITY (Mayfair Games)

One of the best of the new crop of card games—and probably the first card game based on a popular computer game. The overall concept, building a city, may seem boring—but when the threat of nuclear bombs and ugly strip malls rear their ugly heads, things really heat up. Watch for upcoming expansion sets featuring real cities like Chicago and New York.

STAR QUEST (Comic Images)

Another important fantasy art-inspired card game to watch for. Comic Images drew from its incredible roster of artists for the *Star Quest* game, including Frazetta, the Hildebrandt brothers, Royo

and Michael Whelan. The game bears some resemblance to *Galactic Empires* and should attract the sci-fi game crowd.

SUPER NOVA (Heartbreaker Hobbies)

Heartbreaker's other major entry this summer is an interplanetary colonization/conquest game where the primary objective is to build up your own space empire by discovering and developing planets or stealing them. Heartbreaker's definitely one of the better card companies out there, and *Super Nova* shows why.

TOWERS IN TIME (Thunder Castle)

Essentially a more advanced version of *Stratego* with the main difference being that you have to knock out several towers instead of one flag. Art is rather unspectacular.

ULTIMATE COMBAT (Ultimate Games)

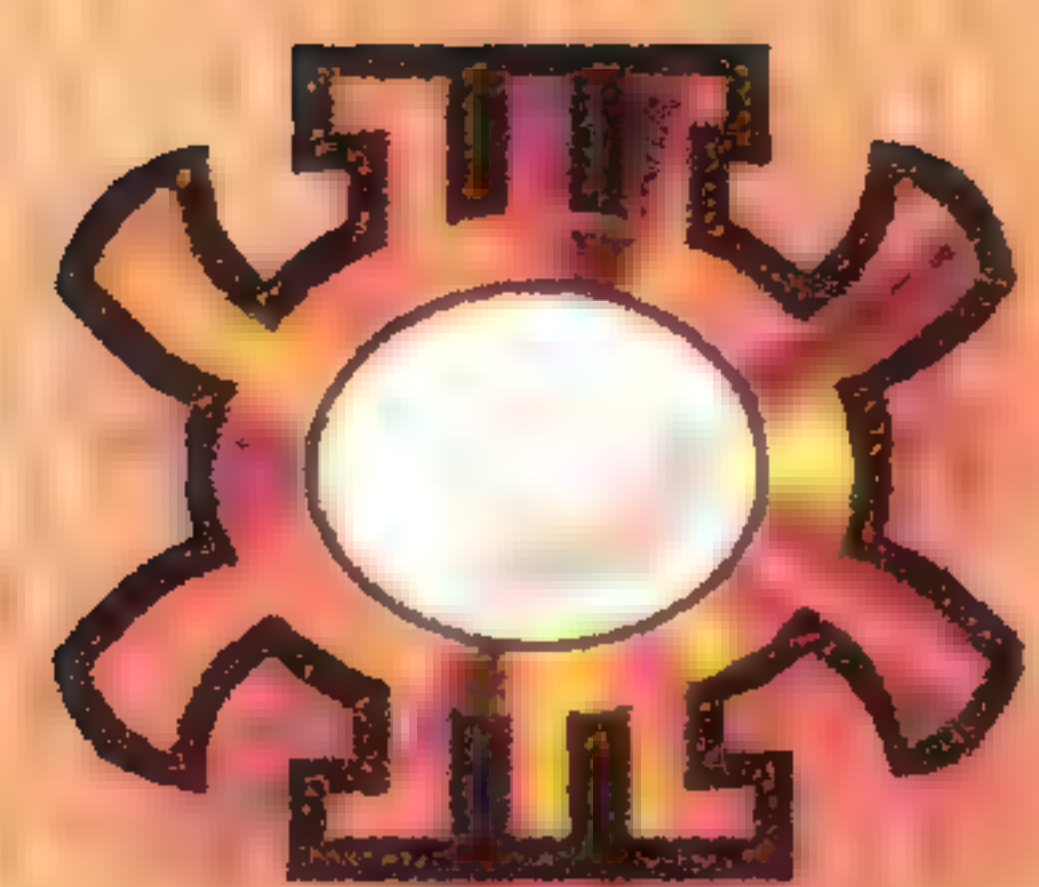
This one looks like it'll be around for quite a while. As the first martial arts card game, *Ultimate Combat* is a very well balanced game with highly attractive cards and a dedicated legion of fans. Game was designed by a team of karate, judo, taekwondo, wrestling and boxing experts (watch for kung fu elements in an upcoming expansion set).

WILDSTORMS (WildStorm Productions)

Adopting the *Bloodwars* concept of battling for terrain, *Wildstorms* (from WildStorm Productions, the folks who bring you *Gen 13* comics) gives you control over characters from *WildC.A.T.S.*, *Stormwatch*, *Team 7*, *Gen 13* and other popular Jim Lee comic book creations. *WildStorms* gives you several ways to play and offers a host of cool new *Gen 13* art—and because of that, it's sure to be a hit.



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whack, who cares?



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BLOODWINGS: PUMPKINHEAD II

SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM

MANUFACTURER: MPCA Interactive

GRAPHIX: C-

CONTROL: C-

SOUND: C

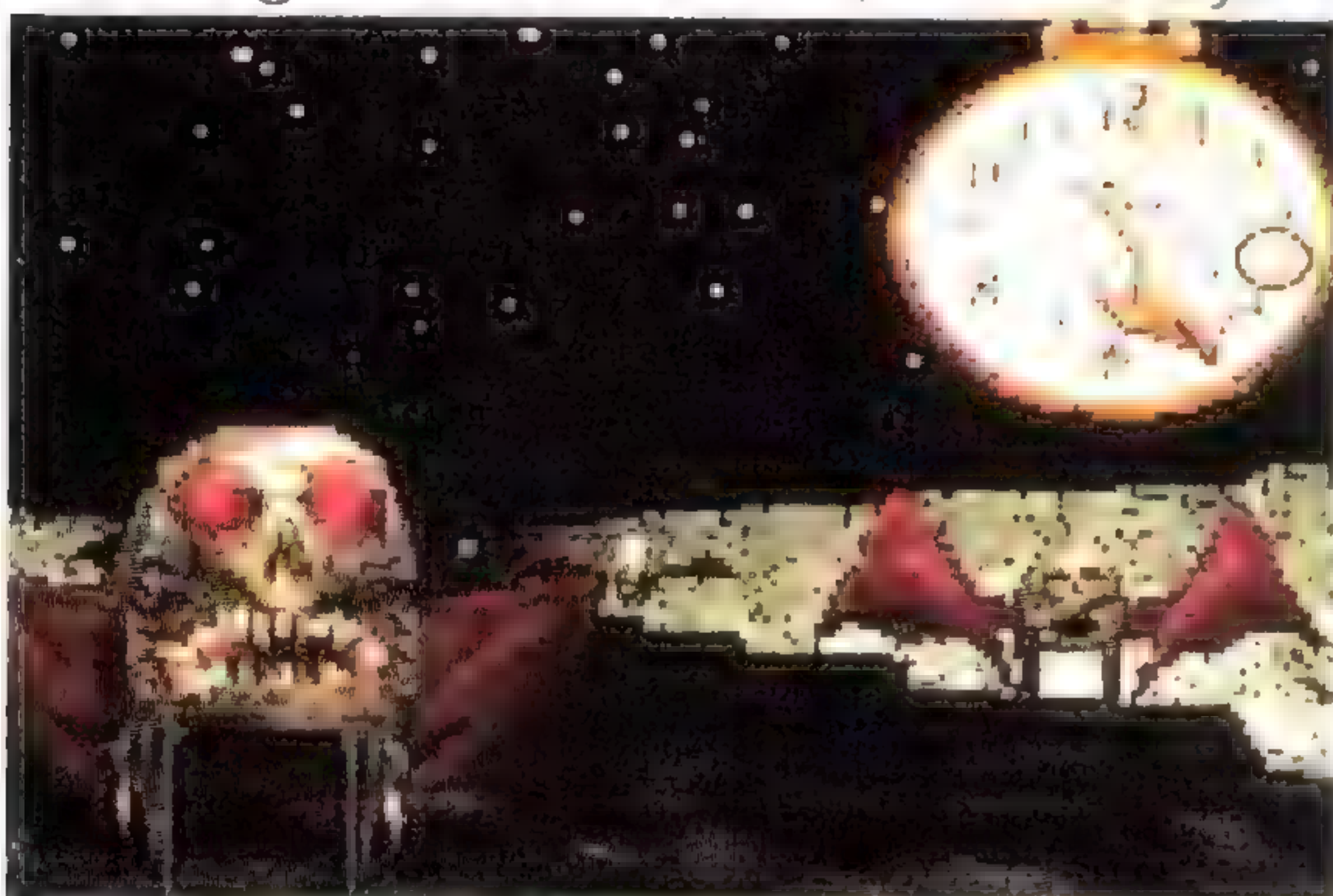
PASSWORD/SAVE: YES

BUY/BORROW/PASS: PASS (Long,
deep, Hail Mary)

OVERALL: D+



What some people won't do to make a buck. Bad enough they even made a sequel to *Pumpkinhead*, a notoriously bad b-grade horror flick, now they've



gone and hacked up some scenes from 1993's *Bloodwings: Pumpkinhead's Revenge* and turned it into a "CD-ROM Interactive Film." Ugh.

What you've really got here is a *DOOM* rip-off without any of the good stuff, like violence. While running around a stone dungeon (which manages to sport a few trees, oddly enough), you may come across a ghoul or two, but you're much more likely to find crystals that fire at you, depleting your energy (one life per game, and the save feature memorizes how much energy you have left. Lame.).

If you find an interactive movie portal (marked by floating eyes) you'll enter a scene from the film, starring Ami Dolenz (*She's Out of Control*) and Soleil Moon Frye (*Punky Brewster*), among others. The video quality is poor even by CD-ROM standards, but the scenes are somewhat interesting...at least the first time you see them. You can grab things in the movie and bring them back to the *DOOM*-like world, then use them...but where is anyone's guess.

The biggest problem here are the instructions, or the startling lack thereof. They refer to such places as "The World Of The Living," "The Zone of Nothingness," and the "Periphery," yet, amazingly, make no attempt to explain or

describe them. But rest assured, you'll have to use the "Flame Of Truth" and the "Voices Of The Wind" (whatever they are) to get there.

Anyone insane enough to have sat and watched all of *Bloodwings* on video might get a kick out of it in CD-ROM form—but all others are advised to run the other way.—HUGH STERBAKOV

NHL '96

SYSTEM: Genesis/SNES

MANUFACTURER: EA Sports

GRAPHIX: A-

CONTROL: A

SOUND: A-

PASSWORD/SAVE: YES

BUY/RENT/PASS: BUY

OVERALL: A



Another year, another *NHL* game from EA Sports. So what's different this year?

In short—everything's faster, smarter and better. See an opening for a defenseman to go all the way? Your AI teammates will now cover your position. Penalty shot, one on one? Try the new spin-o-rama move to dust



the goalie. Got your opponent on the boards? Smash him over the side into his own bench, or slam him up against the glass. Tired of taking the heat? Drop your gloves and beat your enemy senseless (while watching your teammates back you up).

There's no trudging across the rink here. Players go from 0 to 60 in 1.5 seconds and slam into each other with explosive force. After playing '96, earlier *NHL* games seem like turtle races. And your new teammates will never suddenly make a break from wherever the puck isn't: playing with these guys is like playing with pros.

Just like the previous editions, *NHL '96* is stacked with the current stats of every NHLPA player on every NHL team.

You can create, trade, and dump players and play in the same formats as before, including full season and playoffs.

The animation's improved (boasting some incredible detail, right down to uniform stripes, black tape on stick blades and goalie masks), but EA still hasn't managed to get the players' numbers on their uniforms. But the new sound effects are strange: when the fans are disappointed, they sound like a TIE Fighter. And, despite the smarter AI, there are still certain scoring techniques that will almost always work.

In previous years, the Genesis version of almost every EA Sports title pretty much squashed the SNES version, but this time both are equally great. And, oddly enough, the SNES version offers an excellent Practice mode where you can play against another team one-on-one, two-on-two, five-on-one, or any combination you choose. With that in mind, not to mention the fact that the SNES version has better sound effects, we'd actually recommend the SNES version over its Genesis counterpart. Imagine that!

There are strong improvements here, but it's up to you whether to spend \$70 for them. This *is* the best hockey video game ever, but there's still room for improvement and, as EA knows, 1997's just another year away (and the 32-bit versions can't be far behind). Just how many years in a row are we going to get new editions? And better yet, why can't they perfect this thing?—HUGH STERBAKOV

ETERNAL CHAMPIONS: CHALLENGE FROM THE DARK SIDE

SYSTEM: Sega CD

MANUFACTURER: Deep Water/Sega

GRAPHIX: A-

SOUND: B+

CONTROL: A

SAVE/PASSWORD: No

BUY/RENT/PASS: Buy

OVERALL: A



If you're going to make your audience wait forever for a game, it'd better be good when it arrives. Gamers who suffered the, um, eternally long delays for *Eternal Champions'* arrival on the now-wheezing Sega CD have nothing to fear—this one's actually worth the seven-month wait.

Why? Name it: 13 selectable charac-



ters (four of which are new), plus another 11 hidden fighters to discover on your own, four different ways to kill off your opponent at the end of a match (all of them really, really violent), SGI rendered cinemas, an improved combo system that allows juggling, 15 different tournament modes, more interactive backgrounds, a techno soundtrack, tight control, better graphics...it's the Genesis *EC* on steroids, just as it should be.

Of course, those aforementioned rendered cinemas are all but destroyed by the Sega CD's limited color palette and harsh video compression, and the new music comes tied to the old sound effects, so it's still not perfect. Plus, in the time it took this game to arrive (it was supposed to be out *last Christmas*), its platform has reached the brink of extinction. But the new backgrounds and characters are cool, the disc load time is low, and most importantly, *EC* on CD plays even better than the original game—and *that's* what makes this game worth its upgrade.

Good Sega CD games are going to be few and far between from this point on—grab this killer disc while you can.—**DAN AMRICH**

EARTHWORM JIM

SYSTEM: Game Boy/Game Gear

MANUFACTURER: Interplay

GRAPHIX: A

CONTROL: A

SOUND: B

PASSWORD/SAVE: NO

BUY/RENT/PASS: BUY

OVERALL: A



"*Earthworm Jim* for the handhelds? Surely that must suck." These were our thoughts precisely—until the miniature versions of the mighty *Jim* landed on our doorstep. Jeez, talk about being wrong! The translations are almost perfect, right down to level design, idle cycles and game music—so there go the last valid gripes about the Game Boy, as far as



I'm concerned. In fact, the reduced (two-button) control scheme for *EWJ* actually begins to make more sense to your fingers after a just a play or two. I guess the only disappointment here is that since the translations are so faithful, we hand-held gamers aren't getting some entirely different version of the Texas Annelid's adventures. So call me a whiner—guess I'll just have to wait for *Earthworm Jim II*.—**CHRIS HUDAK**

DARK FORCES

SYSTEM: Macintosh

MANUFACTURER: LucasArts

GRAPHIX: A

CONTROL: B

SOUND: B+

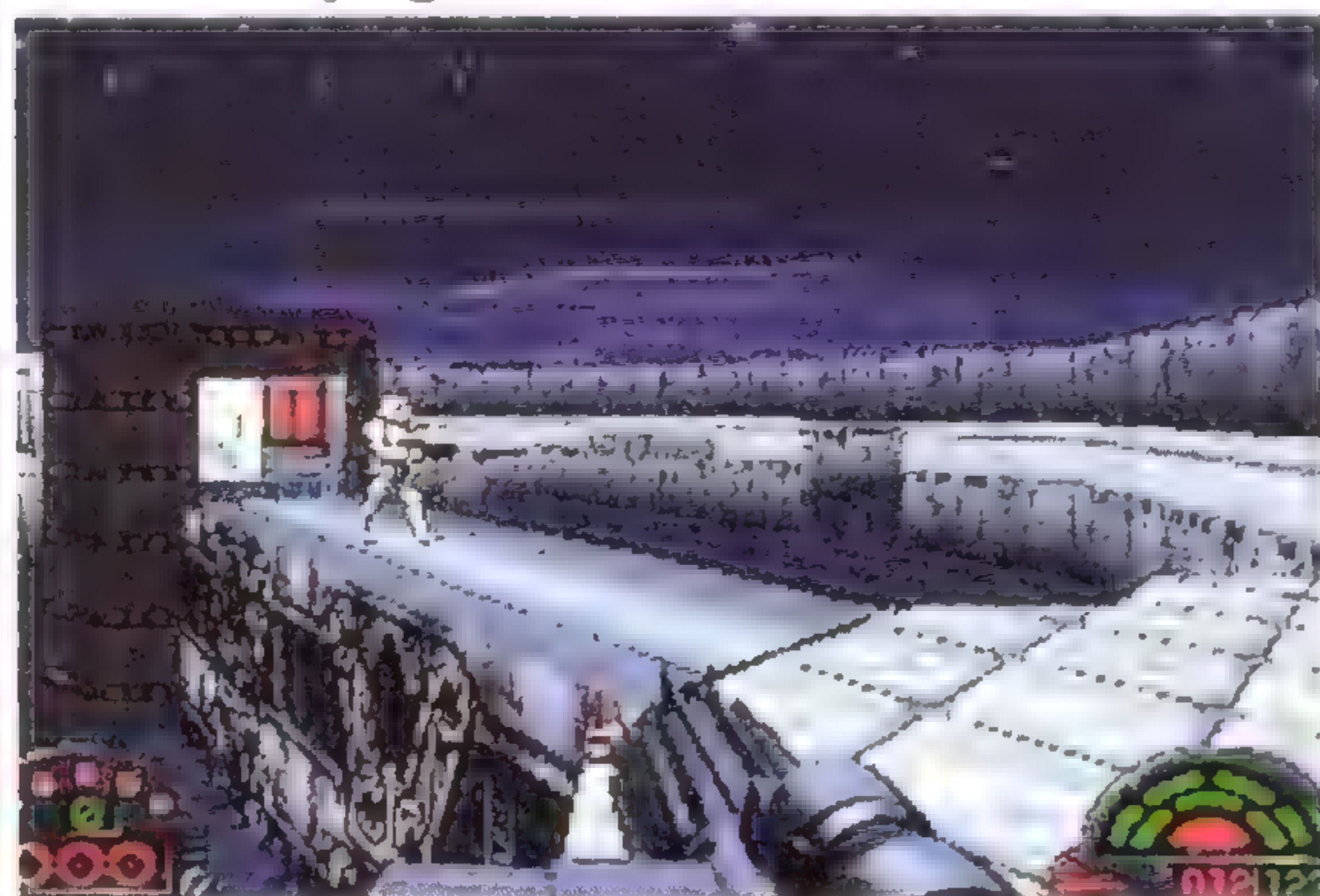
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes

BUY/BORROW/PASS: Buy

OVERALL: A



A first-person crawler in the *Star Wars* universe, and boy, does it look sharp. As a rogue infiltrator for the Rebellion, your first objective is to snatch the plans for the Death Star, and the missions only get hairier from there. The



game's environments are look truly sensational—detailed, and convincingly *big*. Purposeful mission objectives and various neat features (like the ability to make running jumps, wipe out walls with explosives, look up and down, or take lamplit excursions into large, dark spaces where God-knows-what can jump out at you and say "boo!") lift *Dark Forces* out of the faceless swamp of first-person crawlers and up with the best of the recent Mac conversions. Still no light sabers, though. Drag.—**CHRIS HUDAK**

KAWASAKI SUPERBIKE CHALLENGE

SYSTEM: SNES

MANUFACTURER: Time Warner Interactive

GRAPHIX: C-

CONTROL: D

SOUND: D-

PASSWORD: YES

BUY/RENT/PASS: RENT

OVERALL: D



Is this 16-Bit? It seems more like 5200. Atari 5200, that is. C'mon... give credit where credit is due: this is a definite step up from the 2600.

Suit up in a motorcycle outfit that makes you look awfully like the Green Power Ranger and hop on a Kawasaki



motorcycle for the Superbike Challenge. In this first person cycle game, you race against 12 bikers in either the international championship circuit or the Suzuka 8 hour tournament. And make sure to lean forward, cause you can hardly see the road over your dash.

The controls are standard for a cycle game, but actual maneuvering is a mess: for some turns, you have to practically stop to keep from sliding right off the road (while, of course, the computer-controlled bikers fly right past you). As for the road itself, it's adorned with loads of fans, all standing two by two in exactly the same position (when there aren't one dimensional, one color monoliths or piles of tires off to the side). To top things off while you drive, a grating, repetitive hum serving no other purpose than to give you a headache serves as the soundtrack.

There's a great deal of challenge here, especially since you start in 12th place and the other drivers don't seem to adhere to the laws of physics. With a second player (in the same Green Ranger outfit), it just gets worse since you have even less room to see. Even the screen text is hard to read! It seems the makers of this game ran out of pixels or something and tried to conserve.

As far as racing games go, this finishes right behind ColecoVision's *The Dukes of Hazzard*. Pathetic.—**HUGH STERBAKOV**

DOOM

SYSTEM: SNES

MANUFACTURER: Williams

GRAPHIX: B

CONTROL: B

SOUND: B

PASSWORD/SAVE: No

BUY/RENT/PASS: Buy

OVERALL: B



The most obvious change in the SNES version of the great PC bloodfest are the graphics, which have been stripped down to the bare essentials (despite the inclusion of a Super FX2 chip to speed things up). No floors, no ceilings, some of the texture maps are missing, and there's a small but noticeable black band around the edge of the screen. But all the blood and guts are wonderfully intact, along with the sound effects. There's even music in the background, something the "64-bit" Jaguar



version didn't have. (You can turn off the music if you prefer *DOOM* without frivolous tunage.)

With 22 levels perfectly ported from the PC, *DOOM* for the SNES has almost as many levels as the Jaguar cart (24) and way more than the 32X version (15). But the best feature is that all the gameplay is here—all the weapons, all the monsters, all the things that make *DOOM* so addictive and enjoyable.

The SNES version of *DOOM* proves that the 16-bit game consoles are still capable of some amazing stuff—and it puts Sega's rushed-to-market 32X translation to shame. Bloody good fun.—ZACH MESTON

HI-OCTANE

SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM

MANUFACTURER: Bullfrog/Electronic Arts

GRAPHICS: B-

CONTROL: B

SOUND: B-

PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes

BUY/BORROW/PASS: Borrow

OVERALL: C+



I can almost imagine the Bullfrog boardroom meeting in my head, the executives gathered solemnly around the table, as one of them says, "Lads, we've got this jolly great 3-D graphics engine from *Magic Carpet*, so why don't we do something with it?" The result: *Hi-Octane*, a no-frills futuristic racing game that's surprisingly average.

Hi-Octane gives you two race options: Championship and Single Race. Championship is a six-race series of each of the game's half-dozen tracks, while Single Race is a one-race, one-track speedfest. Once your race is in place, choose from one of the six vehicles, with different ratings in speed, "armour" (dig those wacky English spellings), weight, and firepower.

During the race, you pick up power-ups strewn about the track and use your



weapons to slow down the other guys. You only have machine guns and missiles, although you can upgrade them up for more spectacular results. Each track has multiple paths, and even a few hidden shortcuts that can be revealed with some well-placed missiles.

Hi-Octane supports both VGA and SVGA modes, although SVGA is much too slow to be playable, even on a Pentium, unless you turn off most of the graphic detail. This begs the question: What's the point of playing in SVGA if you have to turn all the pretty graphics off?

But there's another, even bigger catch. A few months before *Hi-Octane* came out, U.S. Gold released a racer called *Slipstream 5000* that's a better game than *Hi-Octane* in every way: better graphics, better sound and music, more vehicles, more tracks, more everything. All that *Hi-Octane* has over *S5K* is eight-player network support—but *S5K* has modem and serial link support, which *Hi-Octane* doesn't.

If you wanna get some futuristic racing thrills, I humbly suggest you peek at *Slipstream 5000* before *Hi-Octane*, or wait a couple months for Virgin's upcoming *Screamer*, which promises to be better than both.—ZACH MESTON

SPACE PIRATES

SYSTEM: 3DO

MANUFACTURER: American Laser Games

GRAPHIX: B

CONTROL: B

SOUND: C

PASSWORD/SAVE: No

BUY/RENT/PASS: Pass

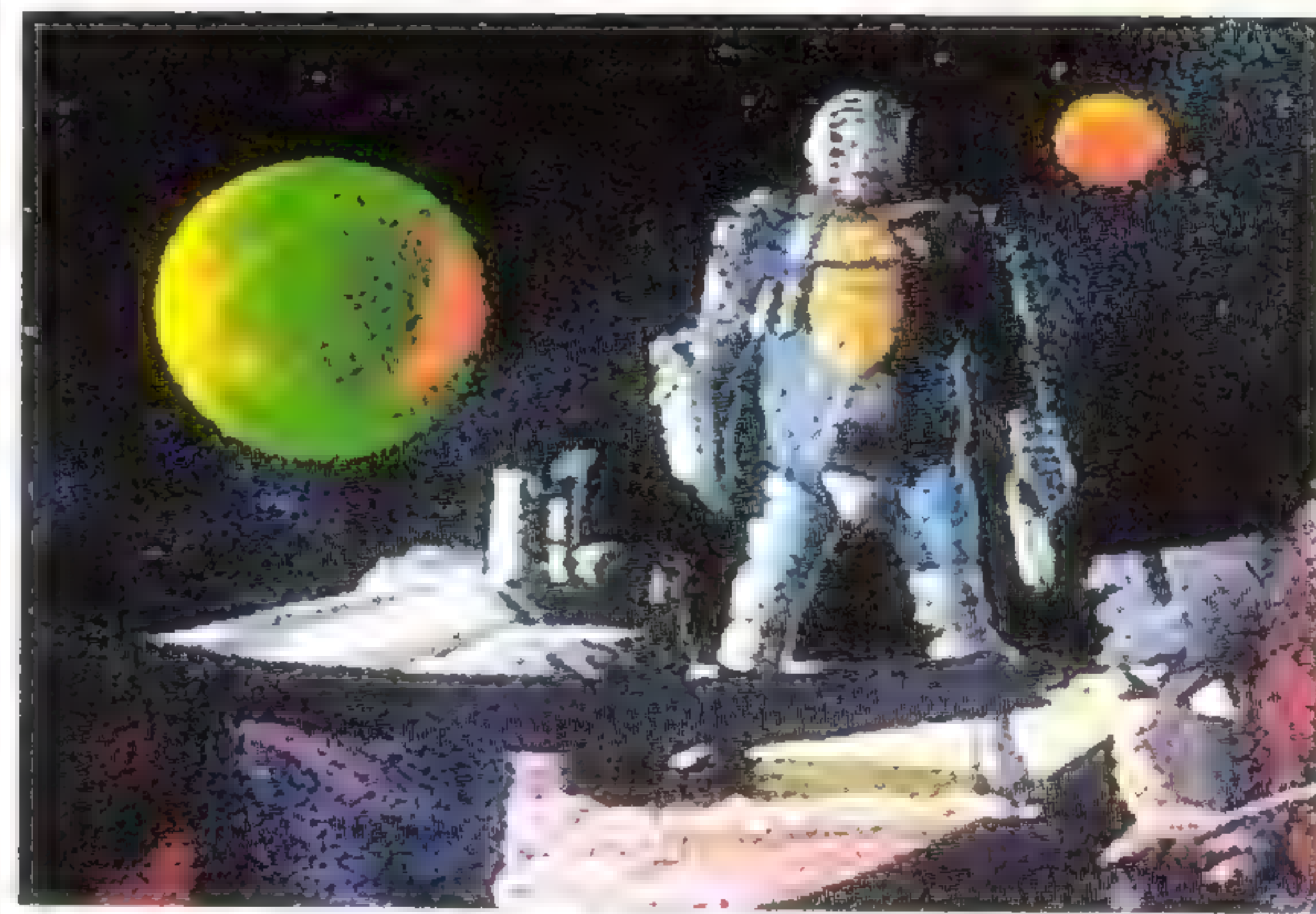
OVERALL: C



I find it just a little disturbing when a company makes a healthy living cranking out laserdisc-based full motion video shooters with porn-film production values, but that's exactly what American Laser Games has been doing for years now. They've already graced the 3DO with such forgettable coin-op conversions as *Mad Dog McCree* and *Crime Patrol*; and now they've ported over *Space Pirates*, a science fiction-themed shooter that is, compared to other ALG titles, only mildly annoying.

Space Pirates follows the ALG formula to the letter: You watch the on-screen action until a bad guy appears, at which time you take aim with the ALG Gamegun (a light gun "controller" purchased separately) or the 3DO control pad and put a hole in the baddie before he puts one in you. The occasional innocent bystander appears, so you can't be a trigger-happy psycho; you need to pay attention to what you're plugging.

Space Pirates controls just as well as other ALG stuff, which is to say, it plays like crap with the 3DO controller and like



a dream with the Gamegun. The game has the problem of not letting you shoot enemies "too early"—the game won't allow you to hit them until it decides they can be shot, which is usually right after you've been killed. There's also the problem of no saves or passwords, although you get a whopping *ten* continues, which should be enough to get you through the game on the fourth or fifth try.

There are so many FMV shooters on the 3DO (not even including ALG's assortment) that it takes unbelievable graphics or unique gameplay to make a new shooter stand out, and *Space Pirates* has neither. Strictly average shoot-'em-up stuff.—ZACH MESTON

WEAPONLORD

SYSTEM: Genesis

MANUFACTURER: Namco

GRAPHIX: B-

CONTROL: B

SOUND: B

PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes

BUY/RENT/PASS: Buy

OVERALL: B



WeaponLord is an attempt by Namco for a last stab at greatness for 16-bit fighting titles. You play as one of seven primitive warriors in a land under the tyrannical rule of the DemonLord. Your destiny is to defeat the greatest opponents of the era to be crowned *WeaponLord* before engaging in a final showdown with Zarak the DemonLord.

The graphics in *WeaponLord* are something of a letdown. Although the characters are large and the backgrounds nice, the game is betrayed by choppy animation. Many of the game's cooler moves could have been much more spectacular with just a few more frames of animation, but instead suffer from a lack of fluidity. The color deficiencies are also exposed here as the overall look of the game is somewhat drab.

The strength of *WeaponLord* lies in the gameplay. Each character is loaded with a number of special moves and is capable of performing vicious Death Moves. Fight fans will be satisfied with the depth of the game as there are many challenging skills to master such as combos, weapon destruction, and defense.

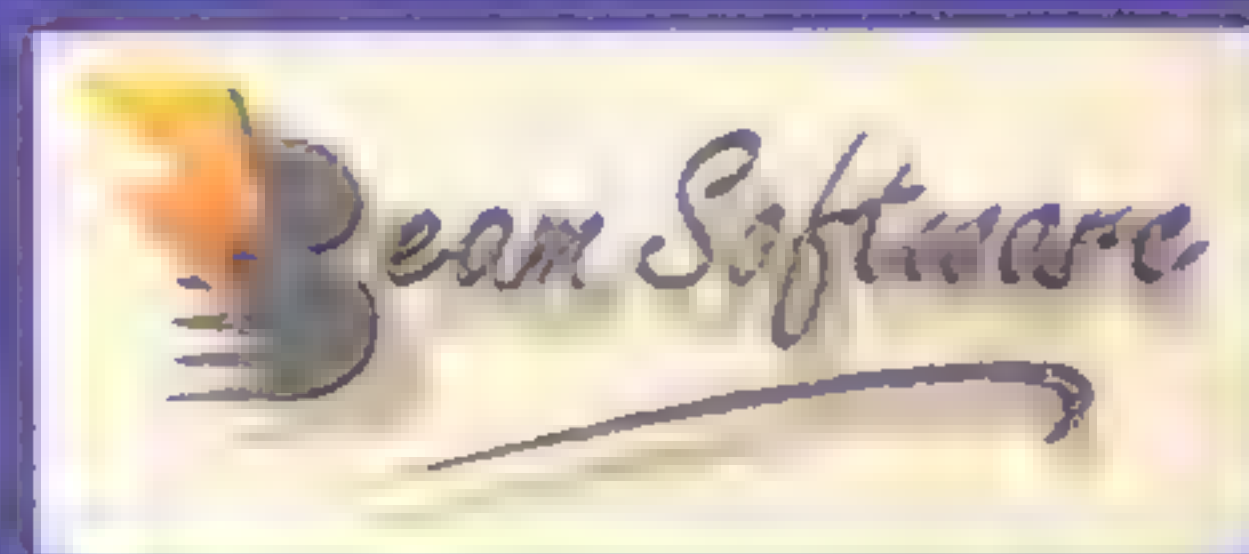
One of the more interesting features of the game is a character's ability to perform a variety of Death Moves. Each

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character possesses between 5-7 finishing moves which can be delivered on the end of a life-draining combo for gruesome results. Various Death Moves include the Degut, Decap, and the Exploding Head. Mastering these moves allows you to add insult to injury in a number of brutal and humorous ways. Solid, if not spectacular.—ANTHONY LYNCH

HARDBALL '95

SYSTEM: Genesis
MANUFACTURER: Accolade
GRAPHIX: C-
CONTROL: C+
SOUND: C+
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/RENT/PASS: Pass
OVERALL: D+



Isn't it about time for Accolade to go back to the drawing board and start with a new line of baseball games?

A few years back, *Hardball '95* would have been a decent game, but with



strong 16-bit contenders like *World Series '95* and *Triple Play Baseball '96* leading the market, this cartridge is truly pathetic.

For starters, the graphics in *Hardball '95* are downright poor. The colors are drab and fuzzy artwork makes it difficult to appreciate the distinguishing features of each team's stadium. While the pitcher and batter animations are decent, the character sprites are somewhat small and, with the exception of lefties and righties, they all look the same. In the Pitcher's View, the fans in the stand look dead, due to the lack of any animation (perhaps this is just a clever way to illustrate the strike-bitter fans of 1995). Overall, the lack of attention to detail seriously detracts from the feel of a real baseball sim.

The gameplay is below average as well. For one thing, it's painfully slow, as the players move as if running through wet sand. Baseball isn't a fast-paced game to begin with, but this is plain ridiculous. The game mechanics are far too simplistic as well, as a beginner can master defensive skills much too fast. The problem with this is that the game lacks the subtle complexities which separate good players from great players. The result of this is many tedious, low-scoring pitching duels which can get quite boring. Quite simply, a game of *Hardball '95* just isn't very fun to play.

On the bright side, the game is loaded

with options and packed with stats. Various options allow you to alter weather conditions, change game rules, and toggle the user's view from behind home plate to behind the pitcher. With the Major League License intact, all of the players are here, but unfortunately the team rosters are not updated for the 1995 Season.

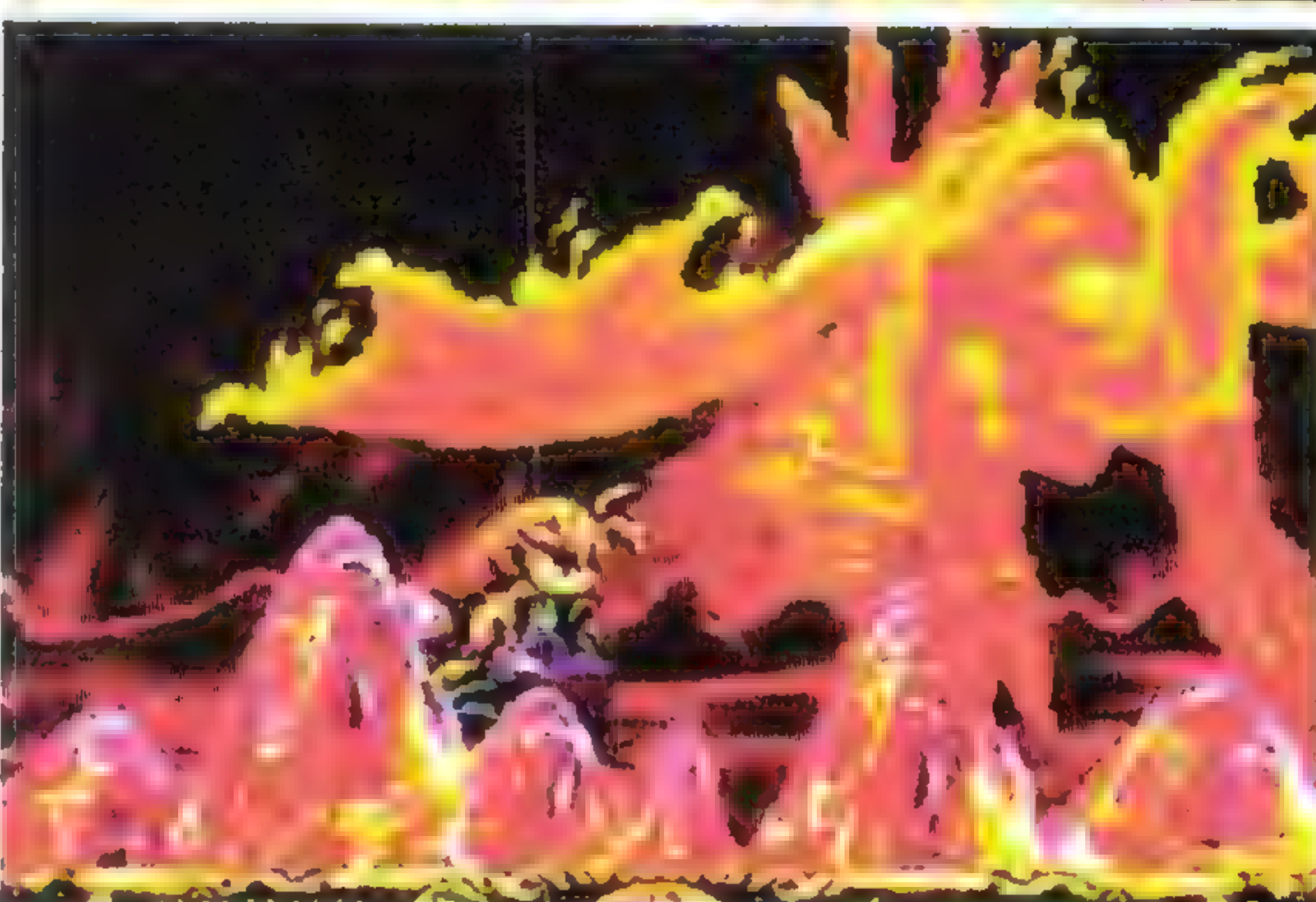
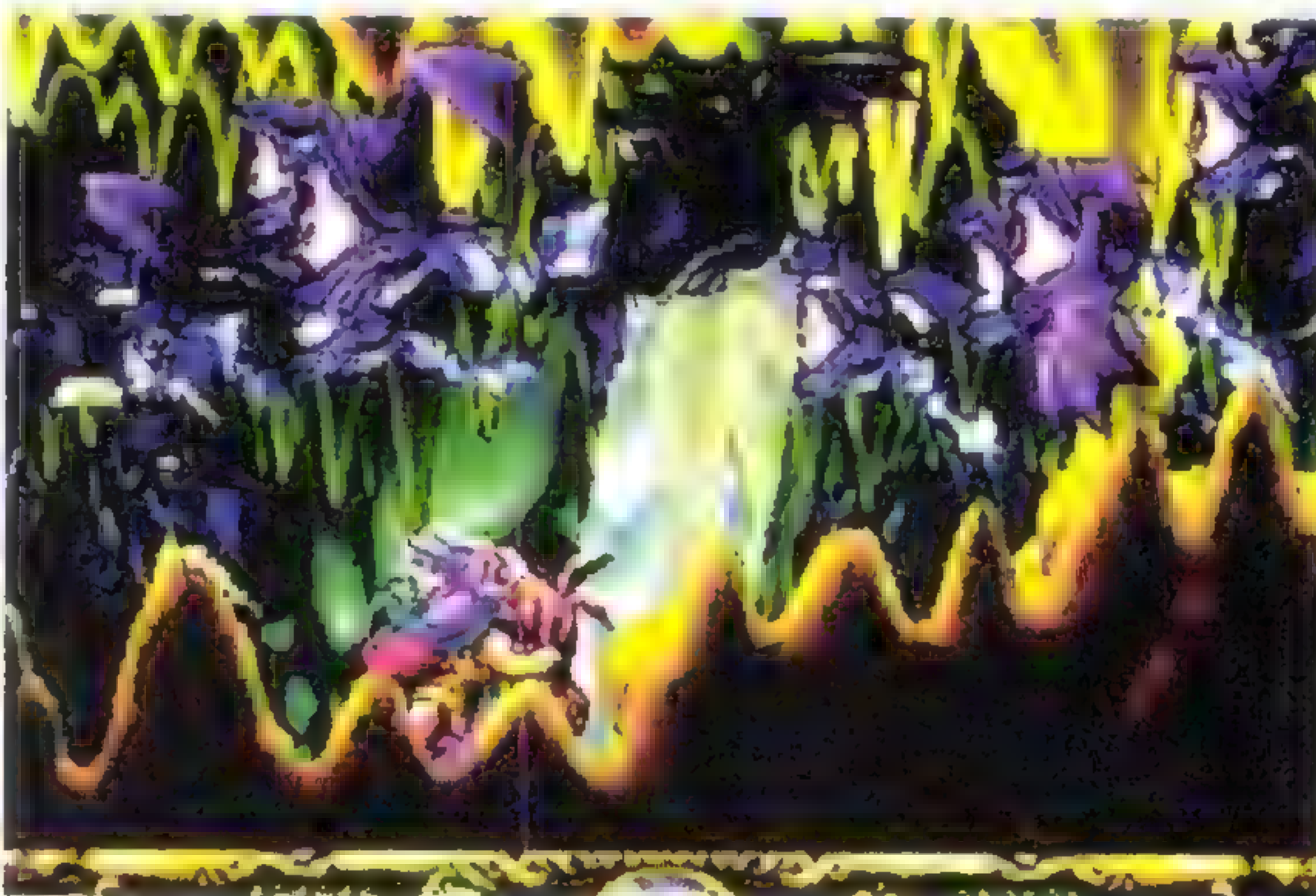
All in all, *Hardball '95* is truly a minor league effort.—ANTHONY LYNCH

ASTAL

SYSTEM: Sega Saturn
MANUFACTURER: Sega
GRAPHIX: A+
CONTROL: B
SOUND: A+
PASSWORD/SAVE: No
BUY/RENT/PASS: Buy
OVERALL: A



One thing the Saturn has needed since its introduction was a nice run-and-jump platform game like *Mario* or *Sonic*, except one that looked mega cool. And apparently Sega had the same idea. *Astal* is, without a doubt, the



most beautiful video game of its kind ever created. It's the kind of game that makes even the coolest, most macho of dudes say, "Wow! That's really pretty." The backgrounds look like airbrushed paintings, and the play area is just as detailed. The coolest part, visually, is the foreground, an out-of-focus plane of scenery that really adds depth to the setting. It looks like you're watching the game from twenty feet away in a jungle of branches and oversized palm fronds. The Saturn's scaling abilities are also shown off pretty well as, depending on the action, the scene zooms bigger or smaller. Your ears will be blown away too, as the straight-from-CD soundtrack is some of the best music since *Ecco The Dolphin*. Even the sound effects are interesting.

Astal's only shortcoming is its lack of difficulty. You'll finish this one in no time, but you'll have a ball doing it.—MARK EAST

MAGIC CARPET PLUS

SYSTEM: PC CD-ROM
MANUFACTURER: Bullfrog/Electronic Arts
GRAPHIX: A
CONTROL: A
SOUND: B+
PASSWORD/SAVE: Yes
BUY/BORROW/PASS: Buy
OVERALL: A



Magic Carpet is in a genre all its own. It's one part *Flight Simulator*, one part *Might & Magic*, one part *Civilization*, and one part *DOOM*—all rolled up in a graphical wrapper that's as cool as the underside of a pillow.



According to the ancient tomes of Molenubar the Chronicler, you are the chosen one, an apprentice wizard from a different dimension (although it bears a striking resemblance to *Aladdin-ville*) charged with returning fifty worlds shattered by excessive magic abuse to a state of equilibrium. Somehow this happens by blowing away anything that looks remotely like a monster, possessing its "mana" and returning it by hot air balloon to your castle. Exactly how this restores the world to equilibrium is not explained, but—convoluted plots aside—the task is easier said than done.

The beasts come fast and furious from the start, and until you get to searching, you have nothing to defend yourself with. But after you begin to master the use of spells like Lightning, Wall of Fire, Undead Army, Mana Magnet and twenty others, you learn that slaying can be fun.

So where's the Plus, you ask? It's hidden. Well, kind of. *Magic Carpet Plus* includes The Hidden Worlds, twenty-five new tougher worlds to conquer including twenty worlds specifically designed for network play. All together, it's a pretty neat package.—MARK EAST



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COMIX REVIEWS

by **Chris Golden**



TWO-GUN KID: THE SUNSET RIDERS #1

Marvel

Written by Fabian Nicieza, illustrated by Gorney & Halblieb

Very rarely do we see the smaller consequences of major events in the many comic book universes that exist. But there are so many questions that run through our minds when we read major stories,

never more so than with time travel. This is not a time travel story...it's a western, of course. But since the Two-Gun Kid, Matt Hawk, once traveled into the future to become a member of the Avengers, it also has elements of time travel. See, ol' Two-Gun knows when he's supposed to die and he's decided to say the hell with the consequences and make sure it doesn't happen. Throw in spies, Apaches and

19th Century international politics, and you've got a cool wild west adventure with real quality art by a pair of relative unknowns. Check it out.

RATING: 8.5

WILDC.A.T.S #23

Image

Written by Alan Moore, penciled by Travis Charest, inked by Troy Hubbs

Though Charest is a fine artist, we must confess that we didn't get to see the art for this issue, only script. So let's just talk about the script by Alan Moore instead. Moore's worked only in extremes lately, with intellectual stuff like *From Hell* and...let's just say "not-so-intellectual" stuff like *Violator vs. Badrock*. Here, he seems to be moving toward the middle again, mainly because Jim Lee and crew are allowing Moore to do basically whatever he wants, including bringing in a completely new team and radically fucking with the old team. This issue features the originals on their home planet of Khera, even as the new team kicks butt back on Earth. While it's clearly not the best Alan Moore has to offer, it probably is the best Image has to offer.

RATING: 8

CYBER CITY #1

U.S. Manga Corps

Illustrated by Tim Eldred

This is proof that quality is all in the execution of an idea, rather than its origins. *Cyber City* blatantly steals from two popular films—*Die Hard* and *Escape From New York*—to make its plot: three convicts work off their jail time as cops, a collar around their necks set to explode 24 hours after receiving an assignment if the assignment has yet to be completed at that time. This time their assignment is to take back control of a five mile high "spacescraper," the eighth wonder of the world, which has been seized by terrorists. See where this is going? Despite its lack of originality, however, *Cyber City*, which is based on a Japanese anime series of the same name, is an engaging, exciting comic book. It's very well executed, and well worth the \$2.95 cover price.

RATING: 8

DARK HORSE PRESENTS 100, #1—#5

Dark Horse

Written and illustrated by various

DHP hasn't exactly been consistent over the years, but it still has generally offered quality, quirky comics that wouldn't get printed elsewhere, and in the early days, served as a launching pad for some of the

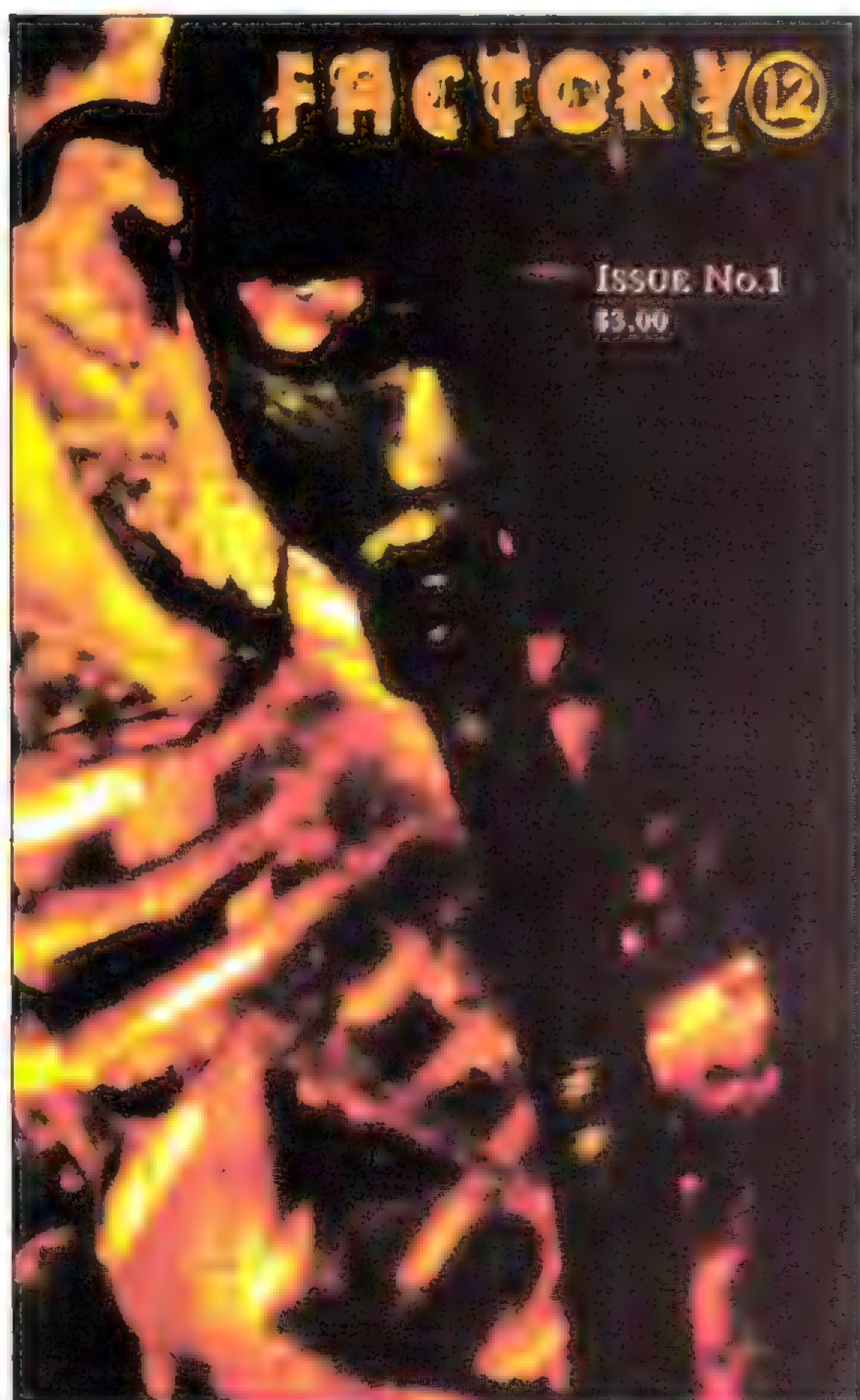
characters that are now a fundamental part of the Dark Horse stable. Here, we get the creme de la creme. *Monkeyman* & O'Brien is right alongside Evan Dorkin's *Milk & Cheese*. Roberta Gregory's *Bitchy Bitch* between the sheets with *Martha Washington*. Each of the five parts of #100 has enough diversity to please just about anyone. The standout stories, unsurprisingly, are Paul Chadwick's *Concrete* story, in which our hero is led astray by a naked woman, and Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* tale, "The Chained Coffin," which offers the character's origin for the first time.

RATING: 9

FACTORY 12 #1

AF12 Publishing

Written by Nathan Carlisle and Carlos Batts, illustrated by Batts



The cover of this book and the illustrated diary of a killer that serves as a back-up tale, are both dark and pleasantly twisted. The main story, "Hel 7," seems a cross between Stephen King's *Graveyard Shift*, H.P. Lovecraft, *Judge Dredd* and *Aliens*, with ancient evil eggs morphing into gigantic Lovecraftian monsters and futuristic cops getting blown away. This is, as you might imagine, generally a good thing. The weird fun is, apparently, just beginning. The art by Batts is better than you might normally find in independent comics with small distribution. This first issue of *Factory 12* is a little overwritten, and has several errors—not to mention the fact that three bucks is a little steep for a black and white book, only half of which is actually comics. For more info, call (410) 225-7671.

RATING: 6.5

GREEN CANDLES #1

DC/Paradox

Written by Tom DeHaven, illustrated by Robin Smith

The noirish mysteries that Paradox has published have been of consistently high quality, and this is no exception. While there is little in *Green Candles* that hasn't been seen before, it is a testament to Paradox Press that we're even looking for originality. We get real characters, which is a nice switch from other comics, and a suspenseful storyline: a private investigator, struggling with his divorce, is hired as a bodyguard by his daughter's teacher, who has been receiving anonymous envelopes which contain photographs of a green candle, burning out. She fears for her life, naturally. *Green Candles* isn't quite as suspenseful as a couple of the others that Paradox has done, but it does pull the reader inexorably toward the climax. Clearly, DC continues to reach out for audiences beyond the superhero genre, and should be applauded for their efforts.

RATING: 7.5

THE LAST AVENGERS STORY #1

Marvel

Written by Peter David, painted by Ariel Olivetti

Marvel's "Alterniverse" initially sounded like an "Elseworlds" rip-off, and in a sense, it is. And yet, the "Alterniverse" stories seem to have two things going for them that DC's "Elseworlds" do not. First, they will be closer to the "reality" of the Marvel universe. Second, and more importantly, they will not substantially rely on a couple of linchpin characters, the way "Elseworlds" relies on Batman and Superman. *The Last Avengers Story* is, ostensibly, just that. The age of heroes is over, most of the characters we know long since retired, a lot of them dead or simply gone. The latest crew of Avengers has been slaughtered by a group of villains who vow to hunt down all "heroes." The villains issue a challenge to the aging Dr. Hank Pym to gather a team for one last stand, and so he does. Along the way, we are shown the terrible fate met by many of our favorites, and must fear for the seemingly hopeless cause of the survivors. Olivetti's illustrations are excellent, with more than a touch of Simon Bisley's influence.

RATING: 8.5

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #74

DC

Written by Peyer & McCraw, penciled by Lee Moder, inked by Ron Boyd

This particular issue of *Legion* is part of a crossover with *Superboy*, the epitome of today's cocky young hero. He and the Legion must save the life of Valor (and you've got to ask yourself why). The meeting makes for some fairly funny bits, but all

in all, *Legion of Super-Heroes* is a snoozy little flashback to Fifties-style comic books that doesn't have a prayer of keeping up with current trends in the industry.

RATING: 4

THE MARK #1

Dark Horse

Written by Todd Johnson, illustrated by Larry Stroman

After making it big at Image, Johnson and Stroman misfired with their self-published version of their series *Tribe*, and Dark Horse did the same in its earlier incarnations of *The Mark*. The old saying about two wrongs not making a right is usually true, but with this project, we'll just have to wait and see. *The Mark* was an interesting book, about the battle for the leadership position of a small nation, and the only hero in that nation. Johnson's script brings both the Mark and his archenemy, the Archon, to the Big Apple, where the Mark will embark on a more traditional crime-fighting career. The combination seems to work passably well, but doesn't sparkle. Instead, if the series takes off, it is likely to be because of Larry Stroman's work, which gained a lot of fans during his tenure on *Alien Legion* and *X-Factor*.

RATING: 7

MOTORHEAD #1 & #2

Dark Horse

Written by D.G. Chichester, penciled by Karl Waller, inked by Tim Bradstreet

Chichester alternates between being a talented writer and a guy who has obviously whipped up a script to pay the bills. Clearly, he worked hard on this one, an inventive, imaginative stew. There's the telekinetic, seemingly indestructible hero who has a voice in his head like Brian



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Benben on *Dream On*. Add to that the flashbacks to Motorhead's childhood, and his days as a priest (and the implication that his sexual urges overcame his vows), and then throw in sideshow freaks and neo-Nazis...oh, and if you order now, you'll also receive a battle with one of the Predators as part of the "Hunting The Heroes" storyline—and therein lies the problem. It's fun, fairly intelligent and the art is promising. But the jumble of story elements and the commentary by Motorhead's mental voice/alter ego are frustratingly distracting. It's good to challenge the reader—confusing him, however, is never recommended.

RATING: 6

TEAM ONE: STORMWATCH #2

Image

Written by Steven Seagle, penciled by Tom Raney

TEAM ONE: WILDC.A.T.S #2

Written by James Robinson, penciled by Richard Johnson

Critics of Image Comics, and even many supporters, have often chastised the successful company for their approach to character history. Marvel and DC have decades of it, relationships that have existed and evolved over that time. While conventional wisdom might say that it would have been better to start from scratch, Image went ahead and created a universe which had decades of backstory and character relationships that nobody had ever seen. This was, essentially, a flawed concept. However, with limited series like *Team 7* and the two *Team One* books, the staff of Jim Lee's WildStorm Productions is working hard to repair that flaw, attempting to let the readers see what things were like in the WildStorm Universe thirty years ago. The question is, of course, whether or not this concept works. The answer is yes—but only to a point. It would be impossible to jam thirty years of history into a pair of two-issue series, so instead there's a focus on one major confrontation that set the stage for many of the events to come (read: in current continuity) for *Stormwatch* and *WildC.A.T.s*. Which means that what we've got here is a slice of life dating back thirty years rather than anything with any particular depth. It's a major brawl—and a lot of fun to read—but with writers the caliber of James Robinson and Steven Seagle, you can't help wishing for more character and finesse, and a little less action. Perhaps WildStorm should consider a regular series—*Wildstorm Flashback*, for instance—which could present such vignettes on a smaller scale, and in so doing reveal far more about the characters and their relationships.

RATING: 7

90 flux

WONDER YEARS #1

Marvel

Written by Abnett & Lanning, painted by Igor Kordey

Tales Of The Marvels stories are about average people whose lives have been irrevocably changed by brushes with the "Marvels." In this story, a young woman is saved by Wonder Man and becomes obsessed with him, believing them to be soul mates, of a sort. She follows him to California and, just when the opportunity to approach him arrives, she witnesses his final battle and death. Marvel has likened it to the way some idol-worshipping fans reacted to the deaths of John Lennon and Kurt Cobain, among others, and that is appropriate. Abnett & Lanning are best known for their writing on *Force Works*, where they have proven to be solid superhero storytellers. They stretch a little here, and nicely. Kordey shows that Marvel may be hurting for pencilers, but they have no shortage of talented painters.

RATING: 7.5

VERTIGO VOICES: THE EATERS

DC

Written by Peter Milligan, illustrated by Dean Ormston

Milligan has built a reputation on weirdness, and this ghoulish tale of an all-American family with a taste for human flesh is no exception. It is darkly bizarre, but with the flavor of bad American television on every page. Here, parents humor their children's idiosyncrasies, and teen angst is best represented by the girl who can't hold on to a boyfriend...because her family keeps eating them. The humor is alternately over the top silly and deeply unsettling. The best moment, however, comes when the daughter, Cassy, must convince her latest boyfriend to join the family before he becomes dinner. It's priceless. It's a 64-page one-shot with typically eccentric Vertigo art by Ormston. The only thing you have to lose is your lunch.

RATING: 10

WEIRD MELVIN #3

Marc Hansen Stuff!

Written and illustrated by Marc Hansen

Hansen obviously owes a lot to classic underground comix. As such, some readers will be turned off by the art on this title, while others will find it refreshing and pretty damn funny. This book is incredibly script heavy, which is daunting when you look at it, but great when you read! His characters, particularly Weird Melvin, constantly analyze and explain their every action, satirizing comic books, comic book readers and the comic book industry with hysterical accuracy. In fact, being a fanboy is a standard plot mechanism and a constant source of amusement for Hansen.

RATING: 8.5

Stax

trading card news and notes

by Steve Fritz

- For those looking for cards of Pamela Anderson and her breasts of steel, Sports Time presents *The Baywatch Collection, Edition 1*. The 100 card base set features photography direct from the show, little known facts about the characters and intensive insider information about the world's most popular program. Subsets include Baywatch Episodes, Bios, Behind The Scenes, Rescue and Baywatch Confidential. Look for randomly inserted autographed cards, Rainbow and Platinum cards and phone cards.

- *Mortal Kombat* fans, prepare yourself: SkyBox is gearing up to release a set of MK cards based on the recent *Mortal*

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Kombat movie and the *Mortal Kombat 3* arcade game. The 90-card series will feature scenes straight from the movie and contain key new game codes that provide players with special moves, powers and strengths for use in the MK3 game. Two levels of bonus cards will be randomly inserted in a limited number of eight-card packs: four bonus Red Foil cards and three Warrior Champion foil embossed bonus cards.

- Comic Images is planning to release a 90-card *Shi* set that will cover the history of the sexy samurai and provide sneak peaks at future characters and stories coming from Bill Tucci's Crusade Comics.

- Later this year, Topps will be issuing its second series of Vampirella cards. The *Vampirella Gallery* trading card series will be a 72-card set featuring new art from the top Vampirella artists, 6 cards featuring the real-life Vampirella and rare Vampi artwork from the Warren Comics archives.

The Legend Continues On September 26th!

THE HAKKENDEN

THE LEGEND OF THE DOG WARRIORS

THE HAKKENDEN: LEGEND OF THE DOG WARRIORS — VOLUME 2

The kaleidoscope of fate begins spinning as Shino and Sosuke put aside their hatred and form a strong mystic friendship based on their shared magic power over crystal balls. Meanwhile, Hamaji's life is threatened by a demon - will she be saved by The Third Dog Warrior? Will Shino locate the real Murasane sword, or will he fall prey to a prisoner - The Fourth Warrior!

Autumn Gets Cooler On October 24th

THE MAGIC GIRL: PRETTY SAMMY

The Newest Tenchi Muyo!
Ryo-ohki Special!

Sasami is an ordinary girl until she's hired as a magic girl by Tsunami who is expected to be crowned the next Juraihelm Queen.

EL HAZARD - THE MAGNIFICENT WORLD

Volume 2 finds Makoto and his gang up to their eyeballs in trouble... And their only way out of it is crammed full of the Sci-Fi laughs and romances which make this one of the most popular titles coming out of Japan.



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SPECTACULAR SKYBOX GIVEAWAY

GRAND PRIZE:

SkyBorg: Into The Vortex CD-ROM game, plus complete set of all 90 regular and six bonus cards from SkyBox Master Series: Creators Edition card line, plus autographed prototype cards from each of the five creators involved in the project (Julie Bell, Brom, Dave Dorman, Dave McKean and Brian Stelfreeze).

19 RUNNER UP PRIZES:

SkyBorg: Into The Vortex compute CD-ROM game

SkyBox proudly introduces the first ever computer CD-ROM game and trading card series crossover—and FLUX is giving them away! The computer game, entitled SkyBorg: Into The Vortex, is an original graphic adventure/arcade game featuring the characters and mural artwork from SkyBox's Creators Master Series card line. The card line features 90 UV-coated and two-color foil-stamped regular cards, all featuring original paintings by the set's five creators (Bell, Brom, Dorman, McKean, Stelfreeze). There are also six of the first-ever Spectra cards, including the first card of the new SkyBox character from guest artist Simon Bisley. Certain cards include codes and strategies on the back that enhance the SkyBorg CD-ROM game.

TOTAL RETAIL VALUE OF ALL PRIZES IS APPROXIMATELY \$750!

Entries must be received no later than December 12, 1995.

No purchase necessary. Winners will be notified by phone. The prize will be shipped as soon as possible. All employees of FLUX, Harris Publications and Skybox are not eligible. Winners are ineligible to enter future sweepstakes in FLUX. The drawing will be held on December 15, 1995; all entries must be received by then. Only one entry per person.

DETACH AND SEND TO: FLUX 1115

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ATTN: SkyBox Giveaway

NAME

STREET ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

PHONE NUMBER (w/AREA CODE)

AGE

JAKE

2x PUNCH + KICK = F, B+P

HEAD BUTT = F, F+P

FACE POUNDER = F, F+P (up close)

EAR SLAP = U+P

MID KICK = F/D+K

SPINNING BACK HAND = B+P

SHOULDER CHARGE = F+P

HEAVY PUNCH = D+P

PICK UP THROW = F, D, B+P (up close)

TWISTING UPPERCUT = B, F+P

SIREN

BACKFLIP KICK = U/B+K

SALMON KICK = F, F+K

MID KICK = F/D+K

LEVITATION THROW = B/D+P (up close)

BACK THROW = B/D+P (up close)

KNEE TO GROIN = F+K

BACK KICK = B+K

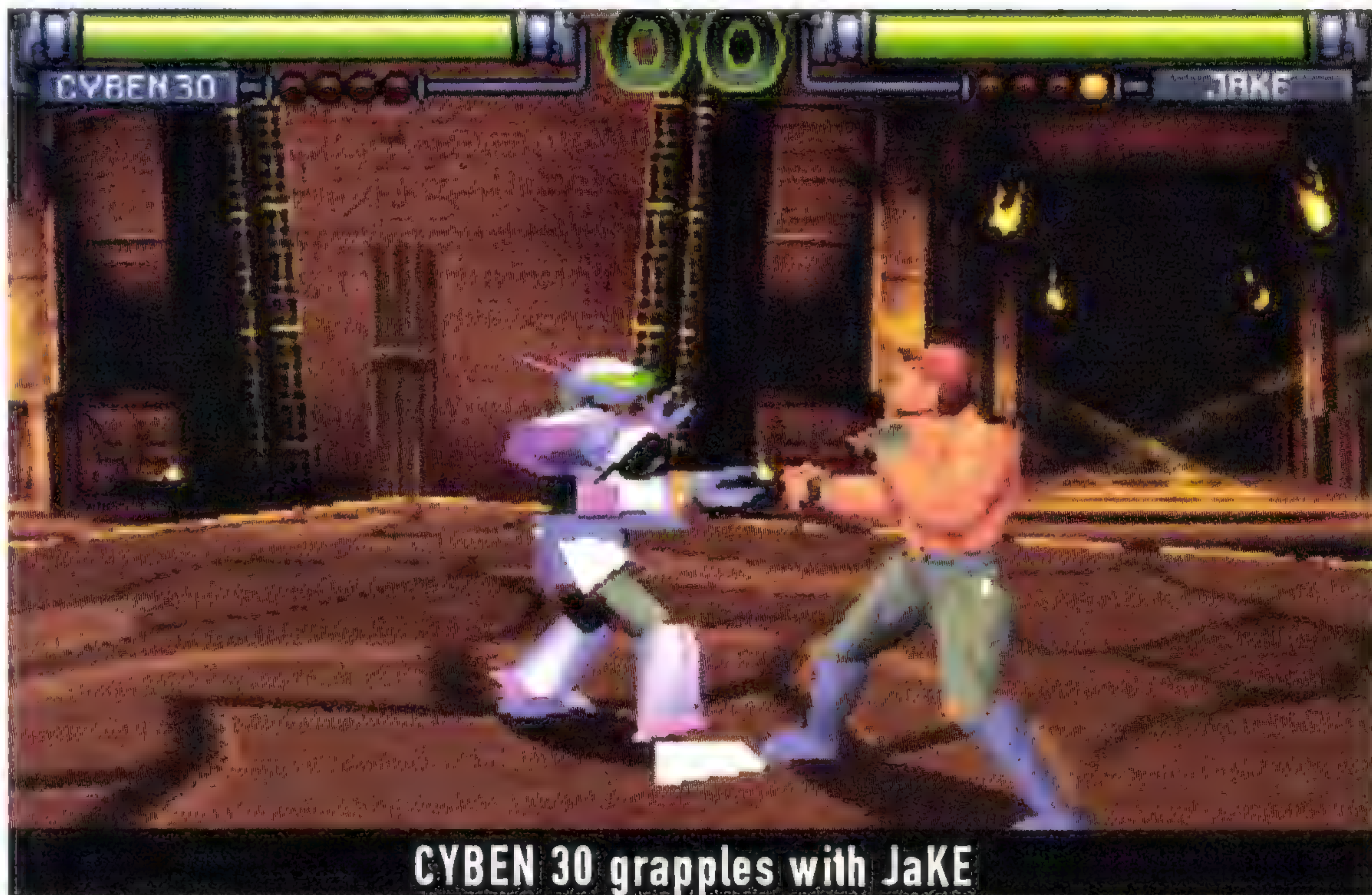
RUNNING SWEEP = D/F+K (from run)

UPPERCUT = D/F+P (from ducked position)

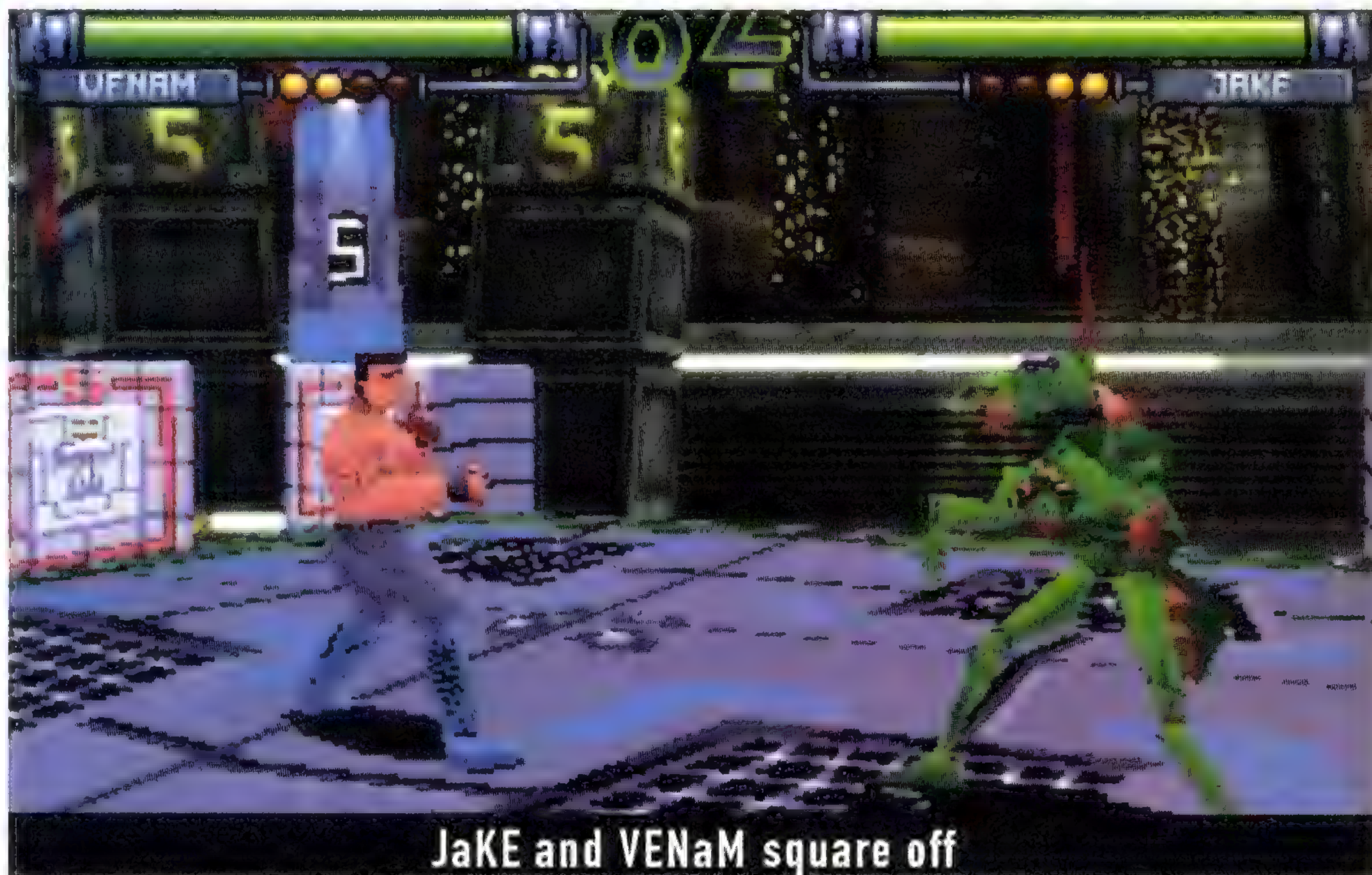
Continued
from pg. 22



JaKE



CYBEN 30 grapples with JaKE



JaKE and VENaM square off

Injected Into a Universe Roughly the Size of Your Skull, Chasing a Madman...

All You Need Is Your DRIVE to Survive.

SkyBox
MASTER SERIES

Creators Edition
Trading Cards

New SkyBox Master Series: Creators Edition Trading Cards are the most imaginative cards ever produced, featuring 95 all-awesome paintings of all-new characters from the fertile minds of hot artists like Julie Bell, Brom, Dave Dorman, Dave McKean and Brian Stelfreeze. Each painting is reproduced on premium SkyBox cards, with a blaze of multi-colored foil, plus bonus cards to die for: the first embossed Spectra cards. That alone would make this the most unique card line in history, but there's more...

SKYBORG

INTO THE VORTEX CD-ROM

It didn't seem fair to leave these fantastic paintings behind UV coating, so SkyBox has unleashed them full-force in cyberspace, where they occupy nine breathtaking worlds in the new SKYBORG: INTO THE VORTEX CD-ROM game. This cross-platform game marks the beginning of a new era in the gaming world, a mind-bending team-up of action, intellect, and artistry unlike anything ever seen before on CD-ROM. And you're in the middle as SkyBorg, a lone cyborg on a mission to save the world. You'll need all your arcade and puzzle-solving skill to be successful, and the cards will enhance your efforts.

<http://www.skybox.com/skybox>

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record reviews



TV DOG

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More! YES!



LICKIN' DOG

A satisfying experience.
You'll get off on it.



BONE DOG

Knick-knack, paddy-
whack, who cares?



PISSIN' DOG

Flush it!



TESTAMENT

Live At The Fillmore
(Burnt Offerings)

Testament have always been a mighty—although somewhat generic—thrash force. In terms of power and playing ability, they wipe the floor with their Bay Area cohorts Metallica. But unlike James and the boys, Chuck Billy and his crew have never succeeded in finding a distinct sound or crafting compelling songs. Thus, this live retrospective (featuring such Testament faves as "Practice What You Preach," "Souls Of Black" and "Into The Pit") is predictably bland: 14 loud, fast, powerfully delivered songs that sound nearly identical to one another. To make matters worse, guitarist James Murphy's compelling, rapid-fire solos are hopelessly buried in the nondescript metallic maelstrom.

But all is not lost in the storm, thanks to three powerful, harmony-laden acoustic tracks (Testament *Unplugged?* Could Slayer be next?) buried at the end of the album. These are alternate studio takes of "Return To Serenity," "The Legacy" and "Trail Of Tears," all three of which capture an intense mood of soulfulness sorely missing from the album's electric material. There may be hope for these guys yet.

—MORDECHAI KLEIDERMACHER



22 BRIDES

Beaker
(Zero Hour)

Even with the proliferation of female-fronted alternative rock groups writing distinctly defining music, it's still hard not to make broad (no pun intended) comparisons when a new band led by women finds its way through the miasma of male-dominated rock. So it's clearly a point of reference to say that 22 Brides walk comfortably between contemporaries Veruca Salt and old school groundbreakers, The Pretenders. But all other contrasts end there.

This New York group, formed by

enigmatic sisters Carry and Libby Johnson, bring to the table a stew of influences, from strong folk to soft blues, and meandering, slow boil guitar. The result is both warm and cold, smooth and gritty. Defined by pointed lyrics ("I never could stand that fucker anyway.") and natural harmonies, *Beaker*, the band's second album, steps quietly and confidently up to the plate. Another score for women in rock.

—JEFF GILBERT



BRUJERIA

Raza Odiada
(Roadrunner)



The only way you'd know this is Mexican death metal is by the album title and songs like "Ritmos Satanicos" and "Sesos Humanos—Sacrificio IV," which translated probably means "Satan's Rim Job" and "Season Of The Death Donkey." Or something like that. The growly guttural vocals certainly don't give it away. Heck, I thought Suffocation were from China. (Funny how gargling plays tricks on the ear.) But since this is probably the only Mexican death metal band in, well, Mexico, a little credit should be given.

Brujeria wear their political agenda on their serape. A sampled racist speech by governor Pete Wilson opens the record and ends with a mock machine gun assassination. You can guess where it goes from there. American death metal might find this a little bush league, what with their gift for the gris-

ly and grotesque. And the music—sophomore Slayer riffing, flat sounding drums, muddy tones—has been done a hundred times over. But for some bizarre reason, it holds your attention—like a car wreck when you're driving by. You keep wondering if it can get any uglier. And it does. The best part, though, is trying to decipher the lyrics, something you can easily do with the tutorial assistance of Corona or Dos Equis. —JEFF GILBERT



THE TOADIES

Rubberneck
(Interscope)



All hail the Toadies—an alternative band with balls. Sounding like the bastard offspring of Led Zeppelin and Nirvana, the Toadies veer comfortably between angst-ridden punk anthems like "Quitter" and heavy-duty, back-to-the-Seventies riff tunes like "Backslider." Along with the compelling and convincing singer, Todd Lewis, the band is endowed with a searing, twin-barreled guitar attack (Lewis and guitarist Darrel Herbert) and a meaty, in-the-pocket rhythm section (bassist Lisa Umbarger and drummer Mark Reznicek), who hold down the groove solid as an anvil. All in all, *Rubberneck* is a driving, rhythmic and soulful album that demonstrates that there might be some life left to this alternative rock thing after all. —MORDECHAI KLEIDERMACHER



BIG SUGAR

500 Pounds

(Silvertone)

Here's a new concept: one guitar, one bass and one drum recorded in one room with one mic in one take. Big Sugar found an obviously cheap way to resurrect great garage blues with just enough cruddy Nineties edge to put some grease in the garter. Who needs four chords when you can make it shimmy with two or three? Or one?

Completing the proper groove, Big Sugar crunch mightily through Traffic's "Dear Mr. Fantasy" with one of the best drunk slide solos on record. "AAA



Ardvark Motel" is an instrumental custom frat stomp made to order. If you like your rock without all the whining and moping and numerous chords, you should give Big Sugar a taste. It might sweeten up your miserable life.

—JEFF GILBERT



GWAR

Rag-Na-Rok

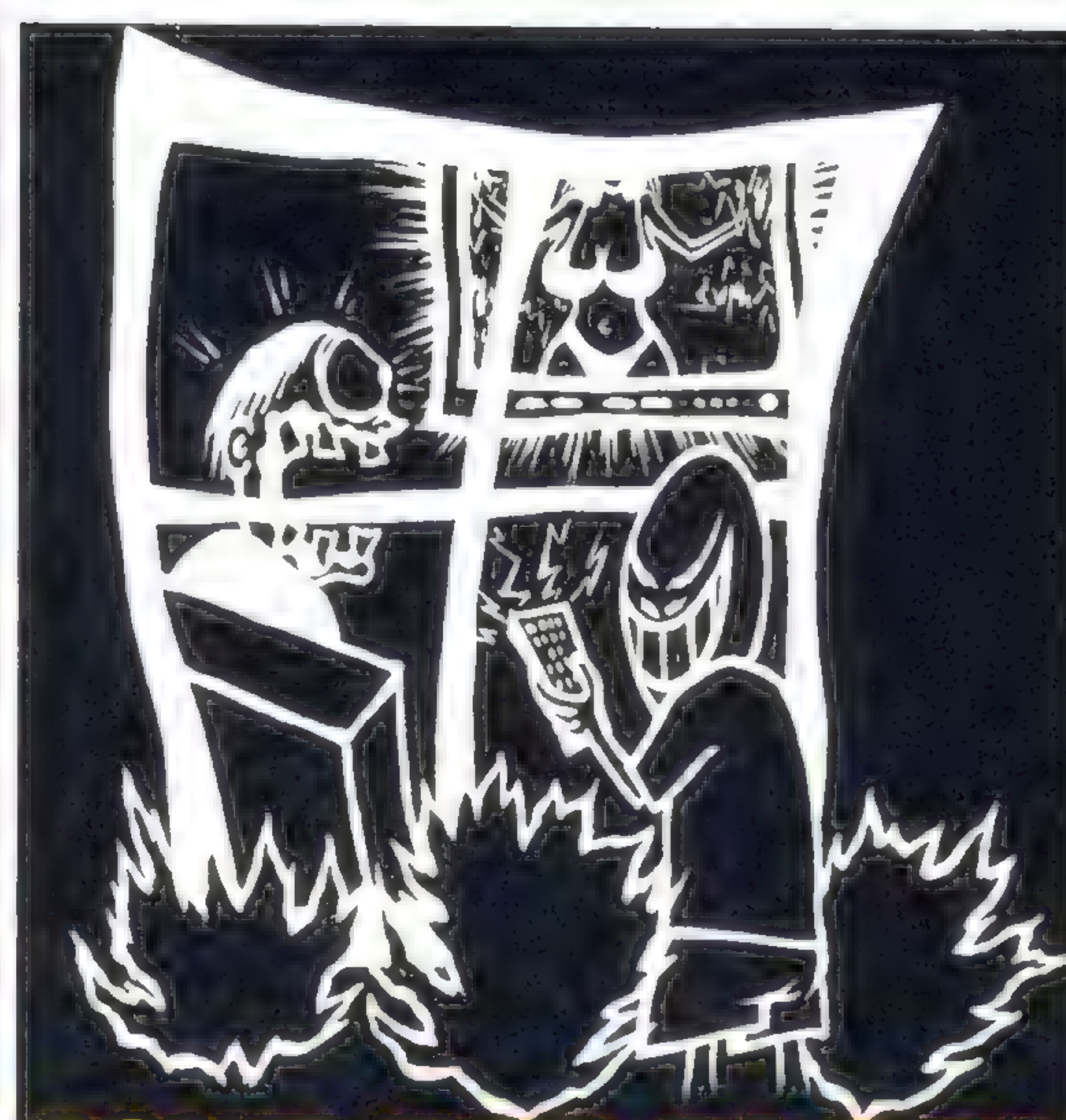
(Metal Blade)

Any band that can rape, pillage and excrete bodily fluids on stage the way these guys do, and at the same time play instruments in huge, hulking, monster costumes, deserves some kind of credit. Alas, GWAR's din has never matched its destruction, and on the band's new album, *Rag-Na-Rok* (anybody recognize the reference from *Thor* comics?), the cosmic gladiators are predictably lame.

With song titles like "Stalin's Organs," "Dirty, Filthy" and "Knife In Your Guts," GWAR's lyrical obsession with the putrid hasn't changed much. This sort of thing can be a hoot in an adolescent sort of way, but all too often it's just impossible to understand what the band's lead vocalist, Oderus Urungus, is singing. Musically,



Rag-Na-Rok is not much different from GWAR's standard grind of grade-B metal and punk riffs. Aside from "Meat Sandwich," an epic, almost-progressive rocker, and "Rag-Na-Rok," a sort of Armageddon party tune, there's just not enough strong material to support a full album.—MORDECHAI KLEIDERMACHER



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GEAR BOX



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(Mad Catz, Inc.)

Tired of having to disconnect your Genesis every time you want to play a 3DO game? Sick of those rinky-dink splitters that send all your important signals along miles of twisted wires somewhere behind your TV? If you answered "yes" to either question, Mad Catz's MC-4 System Selector is just what the doctor ordered. The sleek-looking MC-4 allows for the simultaneous connection of up to four audio/video systems (including all video game platforms, VCRs, laserdisc players and video accessories that use A/V-style cables). The unit supports stereo sound on all four inputs. Retail price is \$19.95. Call (800) 659-2287.



DOC'S RADICAL Fx GAME PAD

(Arista)

Putting cartridges into your game system isn't enough anymore—now you've gotta put cartridges into your controller, too. Doc's new Radical Fx programmable controllers, available for Genesis, SNES, 3DO and the PC, come with a mini RAM cartridge that slips into a slot in the back of the pad, where you can record complex moves like fireballs, Frankensteiners and fatalities. Then, during the game, just tap one of four special buttons to execute the special move perfectly, without screwing up or breaking your fingers. Each RAM cart holds 32 moves (four moves for eight characters), and Doc's will be selling preprogrammed carts for games like *MK* and *SFII*, among many others.



STAR TREK CLASSIC U.S.S. ENTERPRISE and TRICORDER

(Playmates)

Despite all the current politically-correct *Next Generation* crap cluttering the airwaves, Playmates is finally releasing the Classic Enterprise (from that better, bolder age when the Captain always got the green babe, and "diplomacy" was spelled P-H-A-S-E-R-S). The perfectly-proportioned Enterprise is totally free from the wobbly engines that plagued Playmates' Enterprise-B, and features a full decal set, an improved Starfleet display stand, and high-quality, LOUD sound effects for phasers, torpedoes, ambient bridge controls and warp acceleration. This is the best-ever Enterprise toy, bar none.

Playmates is also completing its Classic Trek line with the Classic Tricorder, the third piece of personal tech any landing party needs. The Tricorder—while a little smaller than maybe it should have been—has a flip-up lighted display, three flawless scanning sounds and a shoulder strap.



3DO PROPAD

(STD/Interact)

When it comes to making high-quality controllers and peripherals for the 16-bit and PC markets, few companies have STD's savvy. In an effort to further tighten their stranglehold on the controller market, STD is currently developing products for the next generation of high-end gaming systems. The company's first release in the 32-bit market will be a control pad for the 3DO. Compared to the 3DO's pack-in controller, STD's 3DO ProPad features many improvements, including six fire buttons, independent control for semi and hands-free auto-fire, three speeds of auto-fire, a Y connector for expansion controllers and an extra long cord. The ProPad retails for \$29.95. STD/Interact also plans to release the PS Arcade, an arcade-style joystick for the Sony PlayStation (their PlayStation ProPad is already available) and a control pad and joystick for Nintendo's forthcoming Ultra 64.



DOOM: KNEE DEEP IN THE DEAD DOOM: HELL ON EARTH

(Pocket Books)

Chicks in *DOOM*? It's true—Pocket Books' recent paperback adaptations of the megaviolent PC hit stars a lowly, lonely Marine, Corporal Flynn "Fly" Taggart, and his female buddy Arlene Sanders battling vile hordes o' demons in two novels, *Knee Deep In The Dead* and *Hell On Earth*. Both promise to deliver "the sight-and-sound spirit of the original electronic masterpiece." Umm...okay. The first two books are available now, with a third story planned for the fall. Point your Web browser to

<http://www.pocketbooks.com/DOOM> for more info.



PCL 300 Palmtop Computer Light

(ASF Associates)

Anyone who owns an electronic hand-held device—whether it be a Game Boy, Game Gear, Sharp Wizard or Apple Newton—has at some time or another experienced the frustration (not to mention eye strain) of not being able to see the screen two feet in front of their face because of either too much or not enough light hitting the screen. Now, thanks to the Palmtop Computer Light from ASF Associates, getting a bright, clear image from just about any small electronic gadget is a snap. The PCL 300 is an easy-to-use reading light that ends non-backlit screen visibility problems for all hand-held computer and portable game users. The light uses AA batteries and comes with a DC vehicle adapter, compact travel case and four spare Ektron bulbs—two clear and two red, which are used for night vision. The PCL 300 is available for \$29.95.





EclipsePad
for
Sega Saturn™

The Future Starts Here!

Now that you have the latest in hardware technology, you're going to need an upgrade controller that can really harness the power of this new machine.

STD makes it happen with these hot game controllers for **Sega Saturn, Sony PlayStation** and **3DO...**

EclipsePad for Sega Saturn™

This ergonomically designed control pad sets the standard for comfort and features with eight large fire buttons, independent auto-fire, **programmable** synchro-fire, an LED panel, slow motion, and an extra long cord.



EclipsePad for
Sega Saturn™



EclipseStick for
Sega Saturn™

EclipseStick for Sega Saturn™

This powerful stick — with a sturdy metal base, eight full-size fire buttons, semi and hands-free auto-fire, **programmable** synchro-fire, slow motion, an LED panel, and an extra long cord — brings home all the action of your favorite arcade hits.



PS ProPad for
Sony PlayStation™

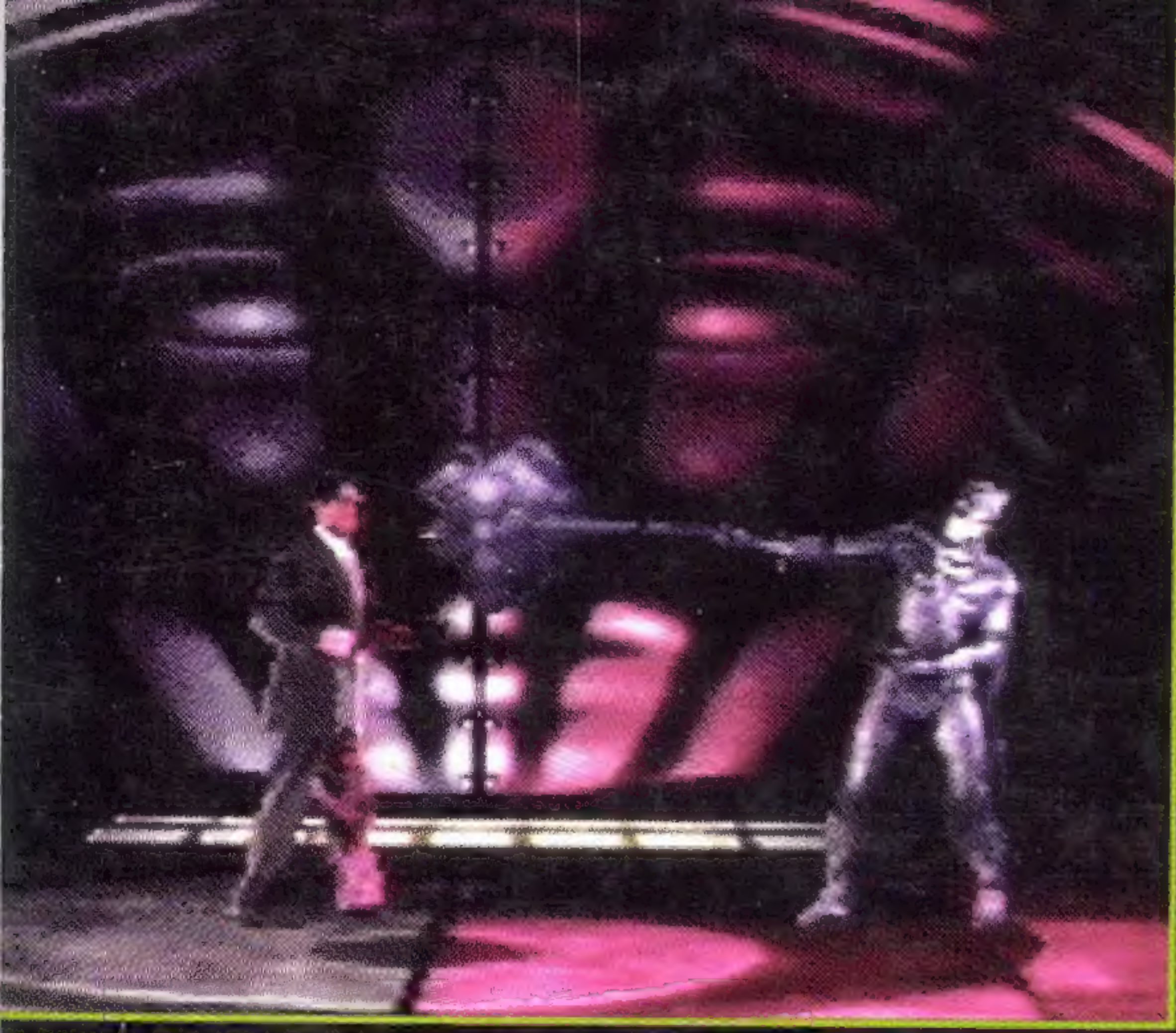


ProPad for
3DO™

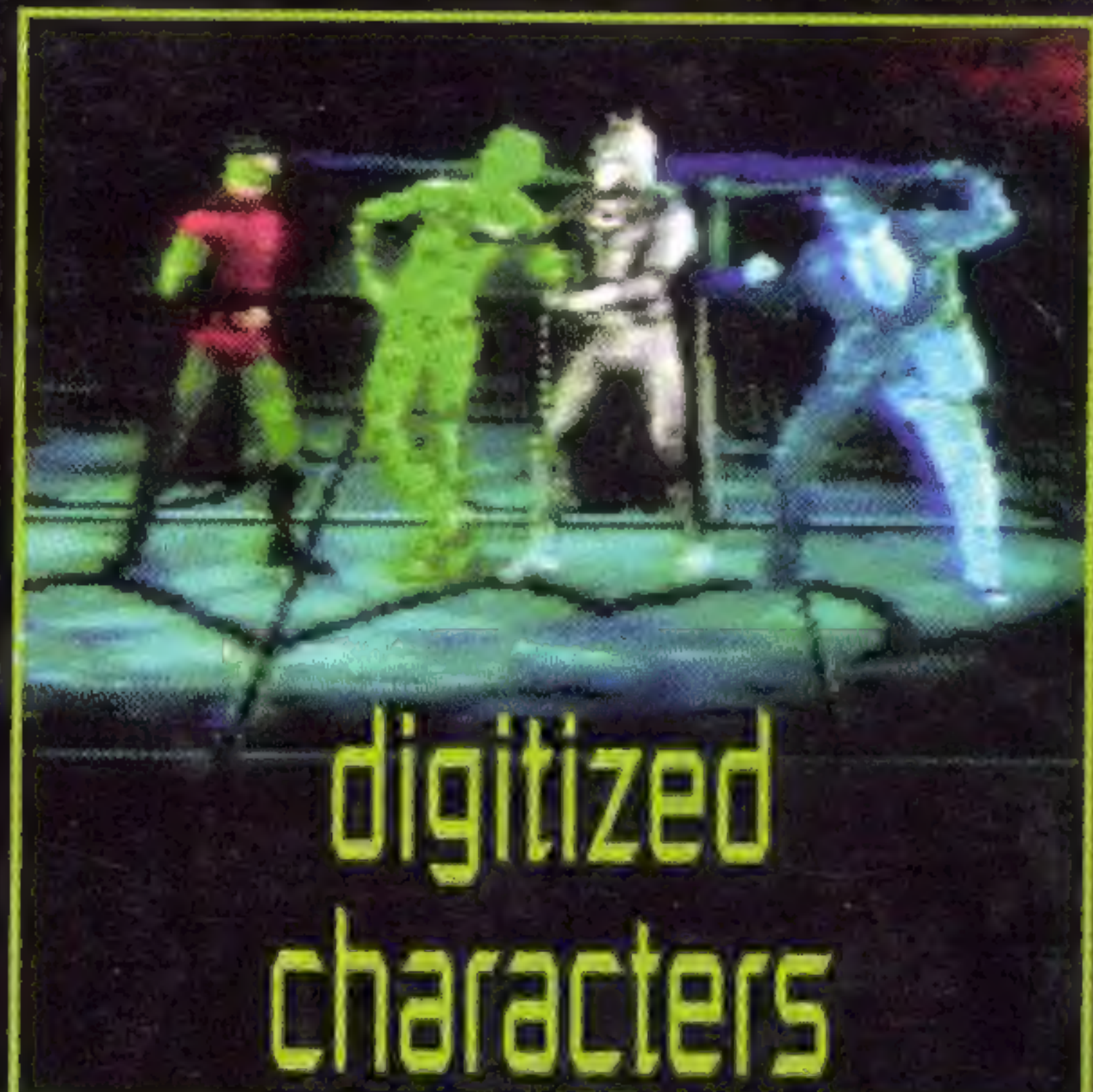
ProPad for 3DO™

Six fire buttons, independent control for semi and hands-free auto-fire, three speeds of auto-fire, and an extra long cord make this pad a vital threat to any opponent.

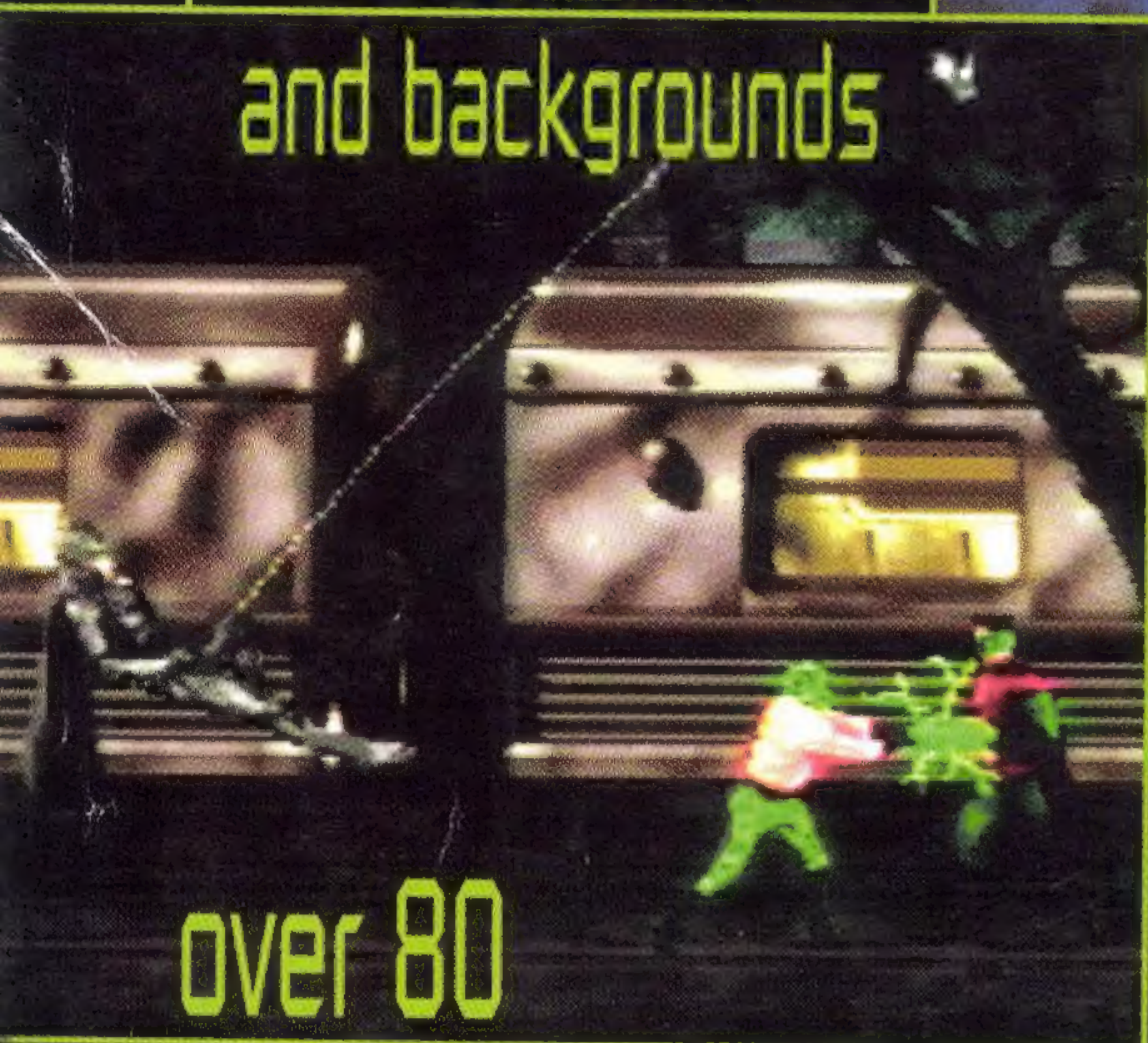
In Total Control!



incredible 3D
rendered graphics



and backgrounds



over 80
unbelievable stages**

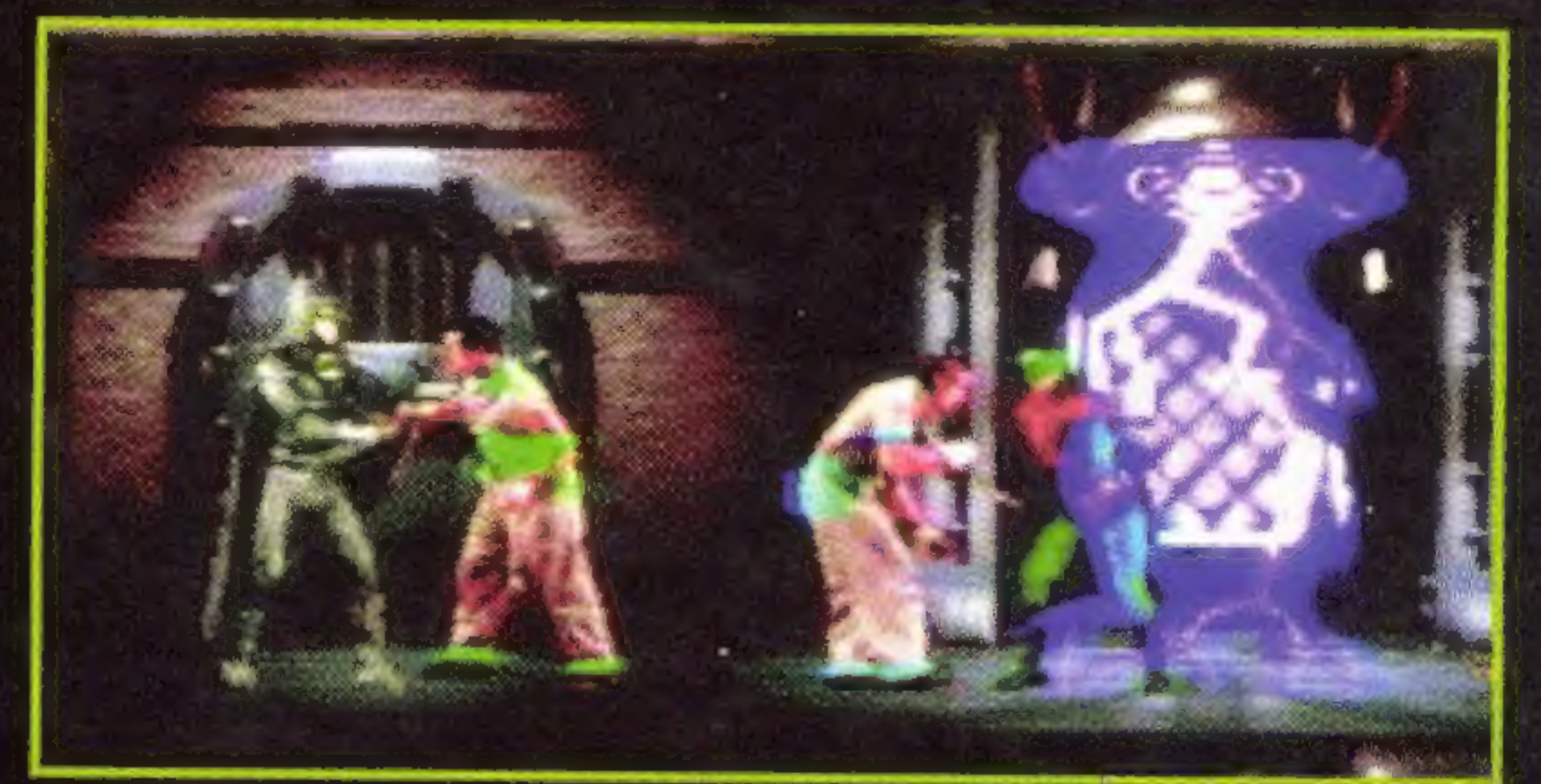


The
real
game
has
begun.

two-face
over 125 awesome attacks



team up
as Batman™*
and Robin™*



battle
holographic
villains

secret rooms

hidden
surprises

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